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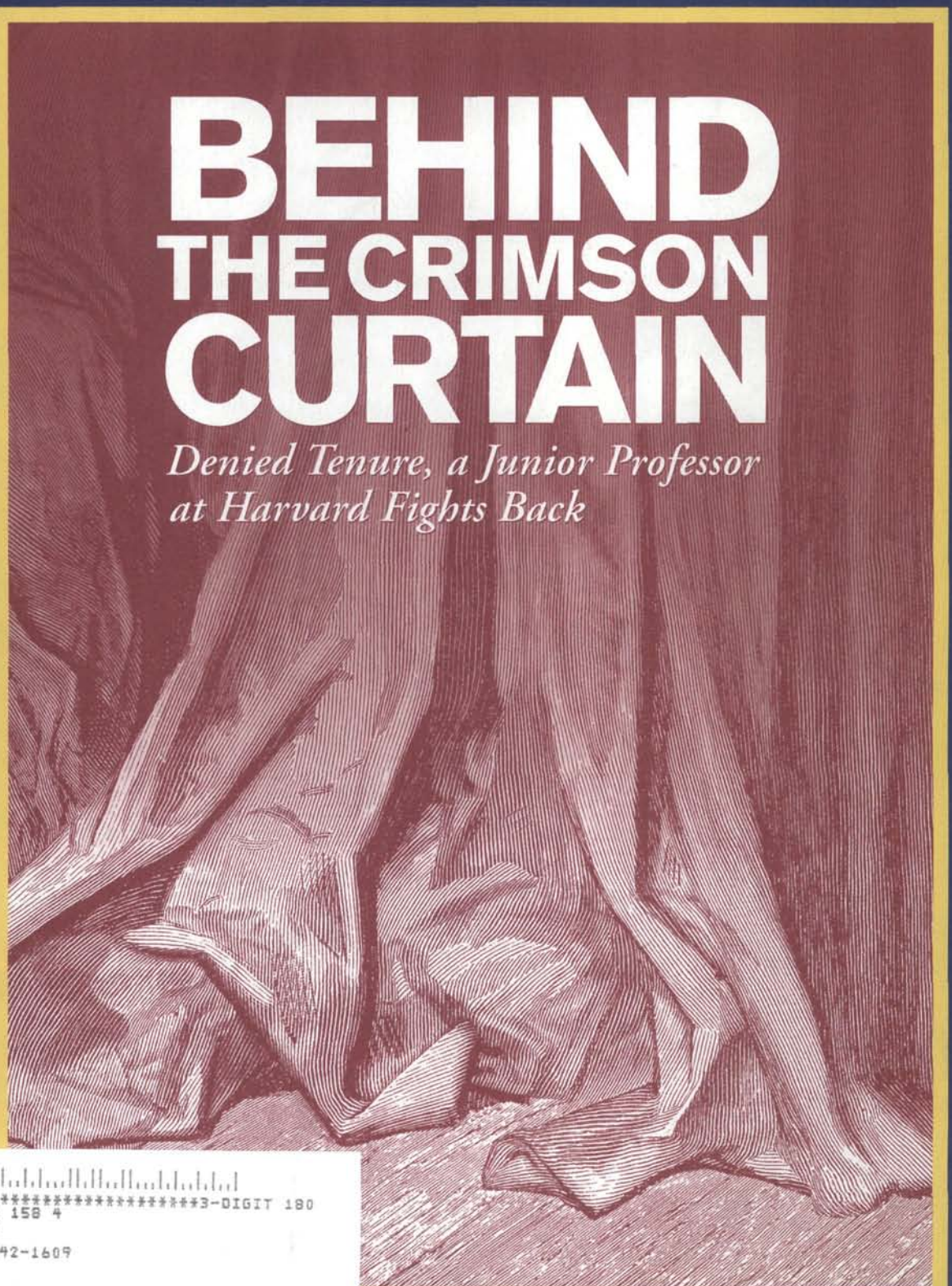

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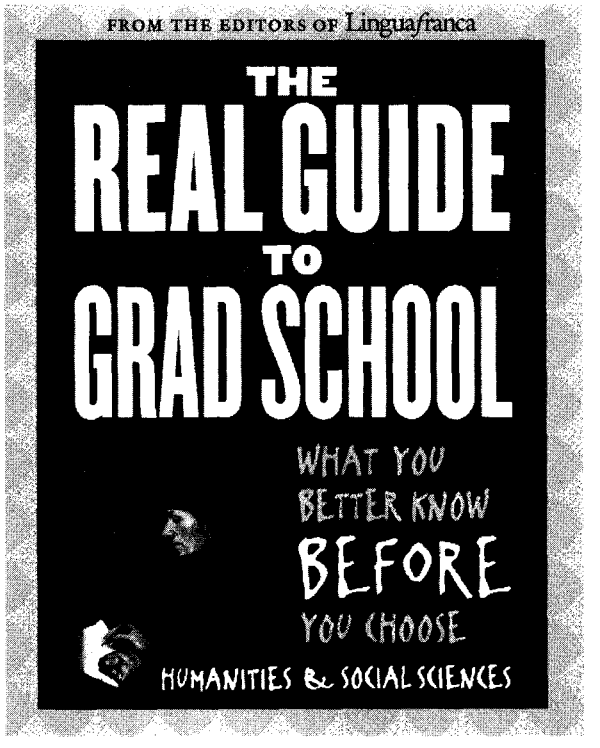

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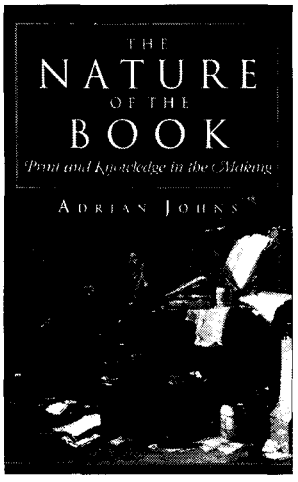

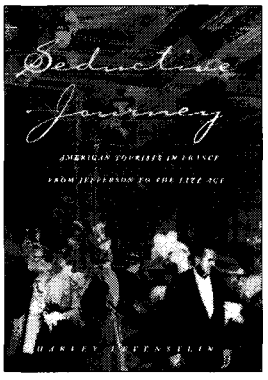

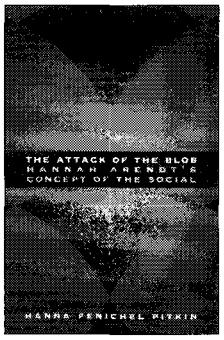

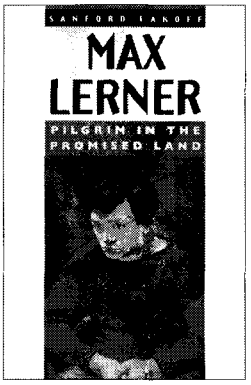

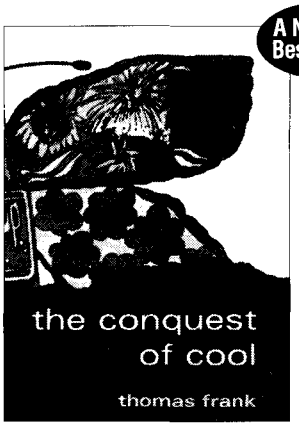

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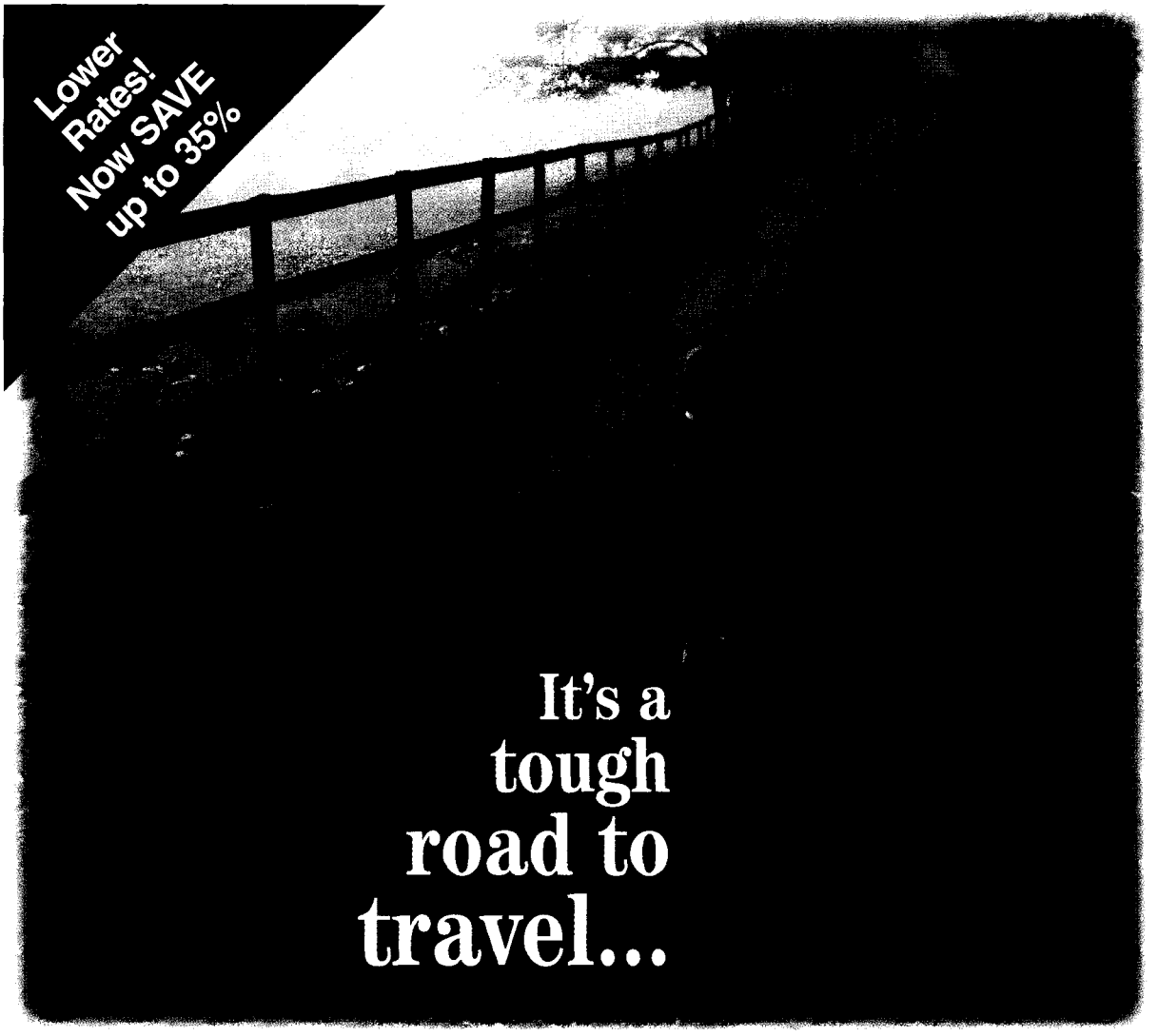

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Field *Notes*

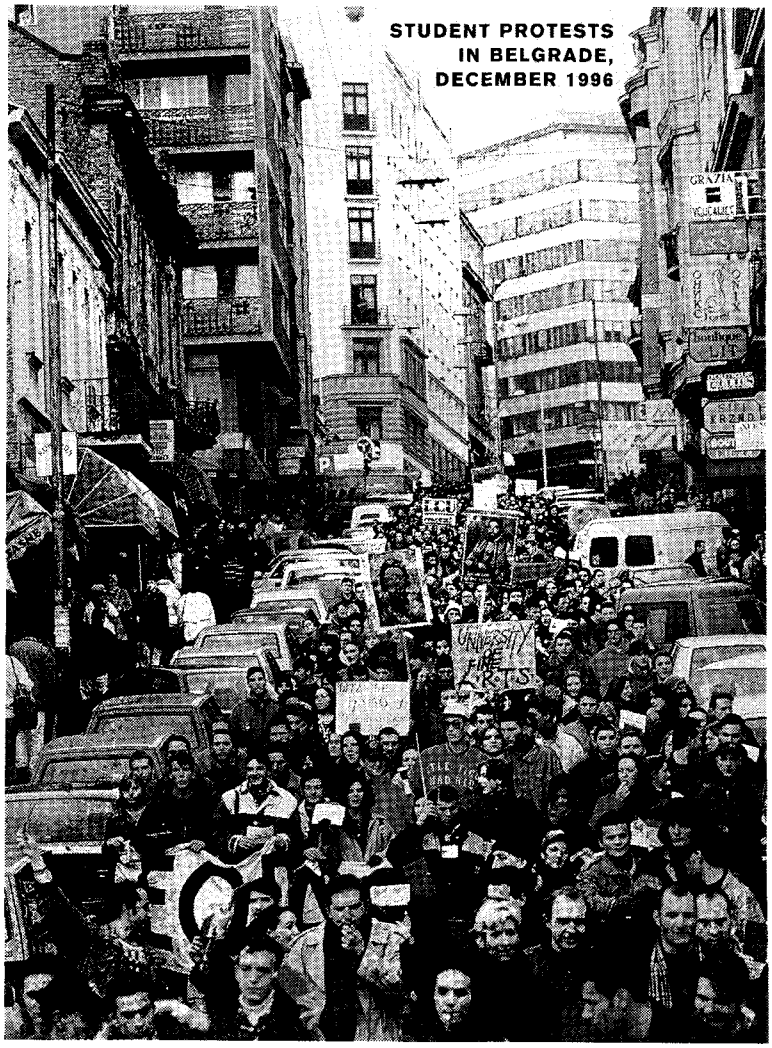
THE SERB PURGE

WHILE STORM CLOUDS gather over Kosovo, University of Belgrade professors are girding for a battle closer to home. These Serbs demand protection of their academic freedom—which is not to say that they are entering into the fracas over post-tenure review. Rather, they seek to repudiate a new Law on Universities that is more repressive, say its critics, than any Europe has seen since Nazi Germany—and they have reason to fear that the law will cripple the political and intellectual opposition to Yugoslav strongman-president Slobodan Milosevic. Says longtime Serbian dissident Dusan Bjelic, currently a professor of criminology at the University of Southern Maine, "When the Kosovo theater begins, behind the scenes Milosevic is going after his opposition."

It is a dark political moment in Serbia. Milosevic's political opposition, once a loose coalition called Zajedno (Together), has disintegrated. An ultranationalist right-wing party has coalesced under the leadership of former Bosnian Serb paramilitary commander Vojislav Seselj, whose unit, the Chetniks, participated in some of the worst episodes of ethnic cleansing in the Bosnian war. Preempting competition from Seselj's essentially fascist party, Milosevic has embraced it as part of a ruling coalition that closes the gap between the ultraleft (Milosevic's party and that of his wife, Mirjana Markovic) and the ultraright.

The Law on Universities, passed on May 26, 1998, certainly turns the screws as tight as they go on dissent from within the ranks of the academy. In a break with tradition, the government will now directly appoint deans, rectors, and members of the governing University Council, as well as all of the managerial and supervisory boards at Serbian universities. Furthermore, the deans and rectors, in turn, will approve all future faculty appointments. And all faculty members, regardless of the status of their existing contracts, were required to sign new contracts by August 5. Many professors, according to the Human Rights Watch Academic Freedom Committee, saw this last exercise of power as the equivalent of forcing academics to sign loyalty oaths.

The text of the law was not obtained by the Serbian public until two weeks before parliament was to vote on it. Faculty and administrators at the University of Belgrade cried foul: They had been told that a new law was forthcoming but that it would be devised in collaboration with the universities. Their protests did nothing to halt the law's progression through parliament and into effect. Approximately fifteen hundred students, professors, and concerned citizens briefly took to the streets—only to be violently dispersed by police and para-police troops.



STUDENT PROTESTS IN BELGRADE, DECEMBER 1996

TOMISLAV PETERNEK/SYGMA

Milosevic has replaced half the deans at Belgrade with his political allies.

Since the law was passed, more than half the deans of faculty at the University of Belgrade have been replaced—and of the replacements, all but one is a member of one of the three ruling parties. Seselj himself, a former political scientist who once boasted of his desire to gouge out the eyeballs of Croatians with a rusty shoehorn, has been appointed

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to the University Council, as well as to the governing boards of the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Economics. The new dean of the Faculty of Philology, Radmilo Marojevic, appointed by Seselj's party, gave a chilling interview on July 2. "Sadly," he proclaimed, "our country and our culture are somehow under occupation from within. We have a fifth column in scholarship, in culture, everywhere." Even his colleagues in the other two ruling parties are suspect: "I noticed that, when we were signing, some deans did not know how to sign their names in Cyrillic, or did not want to, and they teach at a Serbian university."

Meanwhile, Marojevic denounced proponents of building democratic institutions in Serbia as advocates for a form of American imperialism and called the new law "a nearly desperate move to save the university from complete...democratization. A good attempt to return a Serbian character, a national, cultural, and authentic character, to this university."

For many Westerners, what may be even more surprising than the severity of Milosevic's new law is that the Serbs recall a proud history of relative academic autonomy. During Yugoslavia's Communist years, the Party laid a heavy hand on academic and cultural life, but university posts were still elected positions based on peer recommendation—and, according to Dusan Bjelic, there was always a "dialectical tension between self-management and the Party's attempt to intervene." Professor Goran Milicevic, chairman of the Coordinating Committee for the Defense of Universities in Serbia, concludes that "Milosevic does not have the power Tito had. That's why he's trying to reestablish control over the universities in this unprecedented manner, abusing his majority in parliament."

It is easy to speculate that the government's recent crackdown on higher education is a belated punishment for the anti-Milosevic demonstrations that erupted on university campuses from November 1996 until March 1997. Indeed, under the new law, the Faculty of Philosophy, which was the central site of the demonstrations, is to be disbanded: All its constituent departments except history have been reassigned to other faculties. And, according to Bjelic, stipulations of the new employment contracts allow the deans and rectors to fire faculty members who did not conduct classes during the months of protests—putting at risk virtually all professors who participated.

Although Serbian academics talk about the universities, particularly the University of Belgrade, as the cradle of oppositional politics and the only hope for a democratic future, the flora and fauna of Serbian academic and political life are amazingly complex. After all, the first rhetorical shots of Yugoslavia's bloody civil war were fired from the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts: A team of nationalist academics wrote the famous 1986 Memorandum sketching the borders of a Greater Serbia that encompassed parts of Croatia and most of Bosnia. Nikola Koljevic, who was the Bosnian Serb vice president in the brutal regime of Radovan Karadzic, was a Shakespeare scholar (he committed suicide last year). Karadzic, the guiding hand behind ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, was a psychiatrist and poet who once studied at Columbia. Even now, many academics are nationalists of one stripe or another, and it has been widely reported that the majority of demonstrators in 1996–1997 opposed Milosevic largely on the grounds that he had lost the Croatian and Bosnian wars. Cautions Bjelic, "There is no oppositional party in Serbia that is not nationalistic."

> This fall, the only literature courses at the University of Belgrade are on Slavic writers.

But this is only half the story. In 1991 and 1992, the University of Belgrade was also the site of passionate and insistent antiwar protests. After the 1992 demonstrations, Milosevic cracked down, reserving 50 percent of the seats on the university's governing committee for his own appointees. But at the same time a new dissident movement was taking hold. A core of academics that called itself the Belgrade Circle outspokenly opposed the war, criticized Serbian nationalist ideology, and promoted racial tolerance. During the war years, the Circle's membership rose to around five hundred Serbian intellectuals, artists, filmmakers, workers, and dissidents of all stripes. Every Sunday, the Belgrade Circle hosted public events where, says Bjelic, "guest speakers from various quarters came to talk about the war, nationalism, and ethnic tolerance." One of the group's founders, the late philosophy professor Miladin Zivotic, earned the rancor of the Milosevic regime by publicly proclaiming that "the first act any new president of this country must do is travel to Sarajevo and beg for forgiveness. This is the only way we can begin to heal ourselves." During the perilous early hours of

IVO LORENC/SYGMA

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the Bosnian war, Zivotic went to live with Muslim families in the Sanjak region of Serbia to demonstrate his solidarity.

Although Zivotic died in March 1997, the Belgrade Circle survives him and continues to hold symposia—the most recent one was on the aftermath of the Dayton peace agreement and the question of responsibility for the wars in Bosnia and Croatia. The group became a recognized nongovernmental organization (NGO) after the war; it now receives funding from the Soros Foundations, among other sources. Some of its members have launched political parties, like the Social Democratic Union and Civic Forum, though the NGO is not itself affiliated with either. And the Circle publishes a cultural studies journal, available on the Web through the University of Southern Maine's site.

Currently, the NGO wages a vigorous battle against the new Law on Universities. Bjelic, a member of the Belgrade Circle, admonishes that for too long, too many Serbian academics kept silent about the Milosevic regime's war and its treatment of minorities. "The university is now paying the price for its loyalty to Milosevic's nationalist politics. Now it's too late. The hand that you fed is the hand that is strangling you."

Bjelic sees another pernicious pattern in the execution of the new law: The government appointees, he believes, "will eliminate the Western cultural tradition in the humanities" curriculum. Already, he says, the only literary studies offered for the fall semester are Slavic studies, and the only tradition of philosophy to be taught is something called Slavic and Byzantine philosophy. He laments that the ruling parties are "using the university to institutionalize their ideology." But Bjelic's compatriot, Goran Milicevic, is more cynical about the regime's intentions: "This government doesn't have plans. It just makes wrong moves, improvising all the time. They have no ideological or nationalistic goals—except their own private ones. All they want from the university is absolute, practically totalitarian control."

Belgrade Circle members, together with human rights groups inside and outside Serbia, are agitating for the support of the international academic community to persuade the Milosevic regime to repeal, or at least soften, the new law. But it is not easy for the Serbian groups to reach the very same European intellectual community of which they, as Yugoslavs, were once a part. During the war years and even now, international sanctions have isolated Serbian academics, who have not had easy access to books and journals published abroad for nearly a decade, nor been eligible for fellowships like the Fulbright. Many Serbian academics complain that they cannot travel to international conferences because it is too difficult for them to obtain visas and that advances in science and technology have left them behind.

Nonetheless, the Belgrade Circle, operating both from its base in Serbia and through its émigrés abroad, like Bjelic, has managed to rally a fair bit of support. High-profile intellectuals like Jacques Derrida and Richard Rorty have signed open letters and petitions to the Serbian president and parliament, calling for repeal of the repressive new law.

The Belgrade Circle's current crusade for academic freedom is not without its historical ironies. As its own members know well, academic freedom has meant many things to many people as the political pendulum has cut a dramatic arc over the Yugoslavian landscape. Back in 1981, future Belgrade Circle members Obrad Savic and Dusan Bjelic petitioned the Tito regime for the release from prison of a young political scientist from the University of Sarajevo. The professor was detained for his political writings during a time when nationalist expression was verboten in Yugoslavia. To Savic and Bjelic, it was a clear case of the violation of a dissident's right to autonomous academic expression. The professor was Vojislav Seselj.

LAURA SECOR

THE ENEMY WITHIN

Does the U.S. government owe German-Americans an apology?

MOST STUDENTS OF HISTORY know that many American citizens of Japanese descent suffered the indignity of residency in a U.S. internment camp during World War II. But according to two U.S. researchers, this is just part of the story. A good 10,905 wartime prisoners, the researchers claim, were German-Americans, some of whose families had been in this country for generations.

This startling revelation has divided the small community of German-American studies: Were these Germans residing on American soil innocent victims—and therefore deserving of the same indemnity paid to Japanese-Americans who suffered a similar fate? Or were they politically suspect aliens who deserve no apology or recompense? Some scholars see the struggle for reparations as an attempt to redress a long-ignored injustice. Others see only a misguided, and factually dubious, effort to stir up feelings of ethnic victimhood that German-Americans would be better off without.

Among supporters of the call for reparations are the University of Cincinnati's Don Tolzmann, the editor of a multivolume series titled *German-Americans in the World Wars* (Saur, 1995), and Missouri Western State College's Timothy Holian, the author of *The German-Americans and World War II: An Ethnic Experience* (Lang, 1996). Tolzmann and Holian both received their Ph.D.'s from the University of Cincinnati, which hosts the nation's only degree program in German-American studies. And both scholars claim to have turned up disturbing evidence. Relying on extensive personal interviews and recently declassified documents, Holian contends that loyal Americans of German descent were unfairly incriminated in the eyes of their

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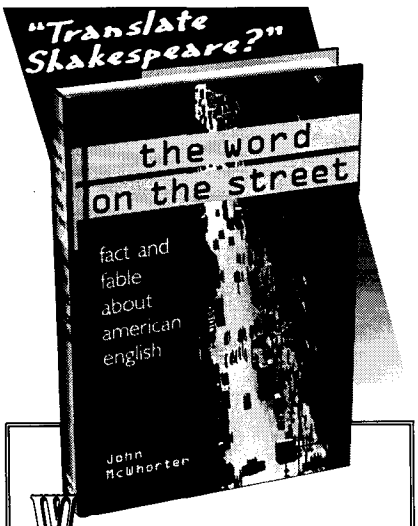
neighbors and the U.S. government by the "words and deeds of a relative few pro-Nazi sympathizers and activists"—namely the small but highly visible pro-Hitler Bundists who staged rallies and protests in places such as New York City, Chicago, and Philadelphia. J. Edgar Hoover's FBI assembled lists of suspect individuals even before the bombing at Pearl Harbor. And under often poorly substantiated suspicions of disloyalty, Holian argues, whole families were detained indefinitely at holding facilities and internment centers throughout the United States—occasionally alongside Japanese-Americans.

Holian's assertions acquire greater force when read alongside Tolzmann's five-volume work—a massive collection of documents spanning both world wars. Within this larger chronology, the scholars see the World War II internment of German-Americans as not an isolated event but simply the most recent instance of German persecution in the United States. (During World War I, for example, Germanophobia was so extreme that everyday German words like "frankfurter" and "sauerkraut" were discarded in favor of more all-American names like "hot dog" and "liberty cabbage.")

Holian proclaims that the thesis of German-American internment now has "incontrovertible evidence" behind it. But other scholars are skeptical. Yale University's Jeffrey Sammons, a specialist on nineteenth- and twentieth-century German-Jewish relations who has also written on German-American culture, has led the charge against Holian and Tolzmann with a scathing critique in the winter 1998 issue of *The German Quarterly*. "Despite all the assertions," Sammons protests, "no evidence has as yet been brought forward that, except for the minor children of enemy aliens, *any German-Americans were interned during World War II*." Holian and Tolzmann's historical interpretation, Sammons admonishes, is riddled with academic errors: incorrectly computed figures, misleading organization of historical documents, muddled and imprecise distinctions between "actual" and "proposed" government policies—to name only a few of the scholarly offenses enumerated in his review. Sammons also charges that Holian blurs the legal and political difference between German resident aliens and German-American citizens, using the terms interchangeably. As a matter of fact, Sammons argues, Holian's characterization of many of the German internees as "legal resident aliens" rather than simply as "aliens" strategically obscures the fact that "their legality became moot with the outbreak of hostilities between the United States and Germany."

Moreover, as Sammons discovered upon retracing Holian's footsteps, there is only one source for the oft repeated figure of 10,905 German-American internees—a single memo from "W.F. Kelly, Assistant Commissioner, Immigration and Naturalization Service" to "A. Vuillet, 9 August 1948." As it is cited by Holian, Sammons complains, "there is no indication whether the letter is official or private, what Kelly



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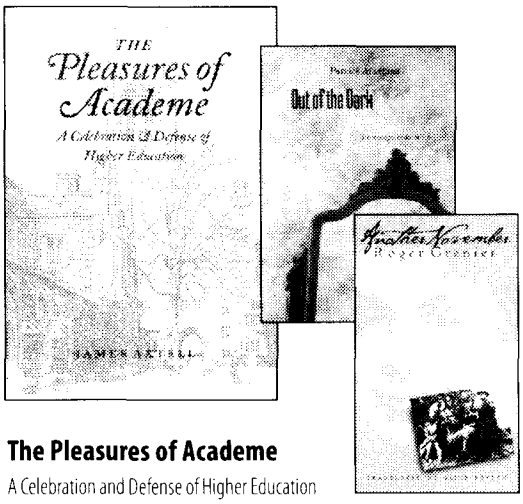

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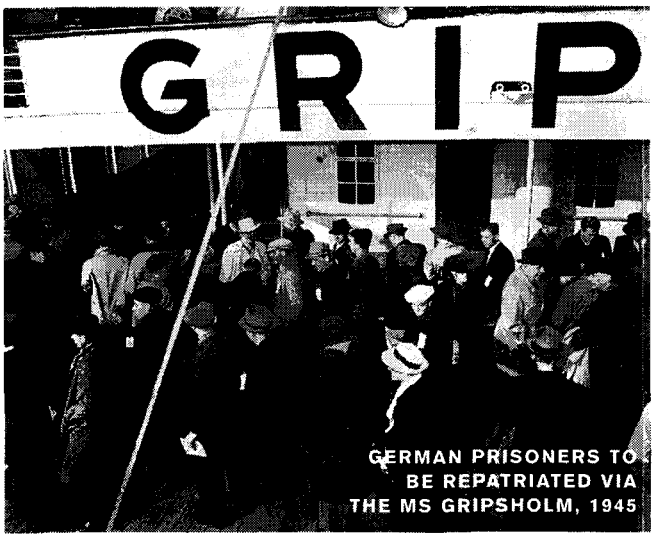
might have known about the matter, or who Vuillet was." Not only does Holian fail to offer any logical explanation for how the number 10,905 was arrived at by Commissioner Kelly, the very same letter incorrectly cites how many Japanese-Americans were interned (a minuscule 16,849)—just reason, according to Sammons, for casting serious "doubt on the utility of the document."

In any case, the comparison between the German and Japanese experiences seems wildly exaggerated. According to one historian in the field of German-American studies, only .732 percent of German aliens, or some 2,300 people, were actually incarcerated by the U.S. government for the duration of the war—"a very, very, small minority." Meanwhile, millions and millions of citizens of German-American heritage lived unmolested in the United States throughout the war. On the other hand, virtually *all* Japanese aliens and American citizens of Japanese descent, nearly 120,000 individuals—78,000 born in the United States—were held in internment camps. Walter Kamphoefner, professor of history at Texas A & M, says that "to compare the situation of the Japanese and the Germans is like comparing apples and oranges. Their situations are not of the same standard."



GERMAN PRISONERS TO BE REPATRIATED VIA THE MS GRIPSHOLM, 1945

But are the skeptics entirely correct? Texas A&M historian and author of *Undue Process: The Untold Story of America's German Alien Internees* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), Arnold Krammer acknowledges that some of the detainees were "genuinely dirty—explicit political subversives with clear pro-Axis sentiment," who even distributed their propaganda in camps. But he also believes that Sammons is too quick to justify an often unfair U.S. government policy on the basis of technicalities. And he sympathizes with the "enthusiasm" of scholars like Holian and Tolzmann. "It's caused by frustration and the frustration comes from the thousands of Germans who've received no acknowledgment, never mind remuneration...every history textbook cites the case of the Japanese, but the German-Americans are not there."

In the end, the debate over German-American detainees may be symptomatic of the uneasiness and confusion in German-American studies more generally. For contemporary trends in ethnic history and ethnic studies—in particular, commitments to ethnic pride and equal representation—seem to be catching up to the world of German-American studies. By some measures, German-Americans are the largest ethnic group in America. But the extent of their assimilation makes many wonder whether German-Americans can be understood as an ethnic group at all in the way Latinos or Asian-Americans can be. And, of course, the dark history of Germany in the twentieth century makes many scholars wary of any effort to encourage ethnic pride.

But while the tensions between ethnic studies and ethnic boosterism will not easily be resolved, interest in these unexamined aspects of internment during World War II seems to be gaining steam. The Society of German-American Studies e-mail has been buzzing with news that the German-American internment will soon become the subject for an upcoming PBS documentary by director John Krollpfeiffer, whose grandfather was a German internee. Tolzmann, the current president of the SGAS, says he is pleased by the new attention to the topic.

Sammons agrees—but cautions that the stories should only be brought back to life with scholarly rigor. Otherwise, he says, "we run the risk of losing the respect of our academic colleagues in other disciplines."

VICKI HSUEH

FASCINATING RHYTHM

IN 1959, MARXIST HISTORIAN Eric Hobsbawm published *The Jazz Scene* under the pseudonym Francis Newton (an homage to the trumpeter and fellow traveler Frankie Newton). When the book was reissued under his own name thirty years later, Hobsbawm explained that he used the nom de plume "to keep the author's writings as an historian apart from his writings as a jazz journalist." Today, humanities professors afflicted with the jazz bug no longer need to hide, and some of them can even get promoted while writing on Louis Armstrong's phallic trumpet or on Billie Holiday and the dark lady of Shakespeare's sonnets. Perry Meisel, professor of English at NYU, even undertakes a Bloomian reading of the Oedipal struggle between John Coltrane and the alto sax player Earl Bostic in *The Cowboy and the Dandy: Crossing Over From Romanticism to Rock and Roll* (Oxford, 1998).

Of course, there's nothing new about the idea of jazz in the academy per se. Jazz has had a place in musicology departments since Gunther Schuller's groundbreaking work in the 1950s. But the advent of cultural studies made

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it possible for humanities professors to test out their critical chops on the music they love. Krin Gabbard, chair of comparative literature at SUNY Stony Brook, grew up as a jazz fan but put his interest aside in the 1970s to write a dissertation on images of the centaur in ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy. By the time he was done, theorists and cultural studies mavens were questioning the very notion of a classic—though if Duke Ellington's *Black, Brown, and Beige* or Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* isn't a classic, what is?

Such disciplinary tumult paved the way for scholars like Gabbard to pursue their obsessions. "With the collapse of the canon, we realized that we could take the music we loved and write about it in a systematic fashion, using the methods of our discipline," explains Gabbard, whose book *Jammin' at the Margins* (Chicago, 1996) includes an analysis of the marginal but essential role of black jazz musicians in white biopics like *The Glenn Miller Story*, an account of Duke Ellington's musical subversion of the screenplay for *Paris Blues*, and a history of *The Jazz Singer*'s reception by critics and audiences. Gabbard argues that these films largely ignore the crucial role that black Americans have played in jazz history. When black performers do appear, they are brought on to validate the superiority of the white jazz musicians. "It never would have occurred to me twenty years ago to write a book on jazz remotely like the book I just wrote."

Twenty years ago, it would have also seemed improbable that the Ford Foundation would support a bunch of humanities and social science professors sitting around a university-owned Morningside Heights apartment talking about jazz, but Robert O'Meally, the Zora Neale Hurston Professor of African-American Literature at Columbia University, moderates just such a group. O'Meally's Jazz Study Group has staged everything from a talk and performance by pianist Randy Weston to Washington University essayist Gerald Early deconstructing images of bebop in the 1950 film *D.O.A.* (The exaggerated antics of the musicians are antithetical to the conventional deportment of real-life beboppers.) At each gathering, O'Meally serves his guests catered pastries and curried chicken sandwiches.

O'Meally, the author of *Lady Day: The Many Faces of Billie Holiday* (Arcade, 1991) and editor of *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture* (Columbia, 1998), agrees with Gabbard that the expansion of acceptable subjects for cultural analysis has provided a perfect opportunity to discuss jazz in larger cultural terms. The music's central aesthetic principles are spontaneity and improvisation. Yet jazz has produced a canon of its own, and it's just this tension between tradition and innovation that interests O'Meally and his confreres. O'Meally sees in jazz an impulse central to African-American—and American—expression. "Ours is an improvised culture," he says. "We're in motion. We're resilient people with this improvised art." This restless genre, he says, is finding new

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institutional homes on campuses: "Now we have an initiative here at Columbia to build a jazz studies program, an interdisciplinary center. I think it's something that's coming to the university."

John Szwed, who teaches anthropology and African-American Studies at Yale, is less convinced that academia is rolling out the red carpet. After writing a host of ethnomusicological studies, as well as jazz reviews for *The Village Voice* and other newspapers and magazines, he published *Space Is the Place* (Pantheon, 1997), a biography of Sun Ra that engages with the colorful and carnivalesque aspects of jazz that are often repressed in standard accounts. Yet he still feels uncertain that the new jazz studies has found a place in the academy. "Bob [O'Meally] has the half-full theory, I've got the half-empty theory," says Szwed. "Jazz hasn't really made it into the liberal arts. There's a lot of jazz instruction in music departments, but as far as creating a critical audience, it's just not there. Does any institution have a jazz program beyond mere performance? I don't see it. The progress on this matter has been very slow."

The view outside the academy is that jazz is too important to leave to academics.

Some of the resistance, he adds, may come from more traditional jazz critics who ply their trade in the music press. "I know the view outside the

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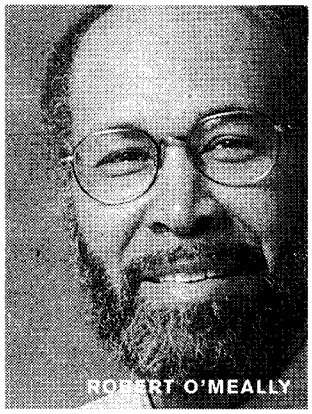
academy is that jazz is a matter too important to leave to academics," he says.

The mistrust these critics feel toward their academic counterparts can be explained in part by the same shifts in literary scholarship that have made jazz studies possible. Martin Williams, the jazz critic most influential on the baby boom generation, received an M.A. in English from the University of Pennsylvania in the 1950s, when the New Critics still walked the earth. Even today, whether they're aware of it or not, most jazz critics are basically writing the jazz version of *The Well Wrought Urn*. Jazz critics assume that there can be close readings of jazz "texts"—in the democratic spirit of post–G.I. Bill New Criticism, without any need for formal training—which can be the

Scholars tend to treat jazz with kid gloves.

basis for determining whether a player is "the real thing" or merely derivative. Like the New Critics, who valued text at the expense of context, Williams wrote the history of jazz in terms of rhythmic changes, largely ignoring political, racial, and gender upheaval.

This critical conservatism is still largely unchallenged; as *The New York Times* noted recently, "Jazz critics are among the last historians who still believe in great man theories." So when deconstructors, historicizers, and race and gender theorists turn their attention to the subject, it's no wonder that the reaction from many journalists resembles the agitation of old-guard English professors.


ROBERT O'MEALLY

But because jazz occupies the liminal space between high and low—between elitism and populism—it may be the ideal art form for a postmodern academy. Jazz allows you to be with the people, but in an utterly elitist way, separating committed fans from both the regime and the rabble. Perhaps the irony is that, while scholars are fighting for jazz to be taken as seriously as other modes of aesthetic discourse, the art itself tends to be treated with kid gloves. Indeed, approaching a jazz text like *Kind of Blue* or *Black, Brown, and Beige* with as much skepticism as a literature professor would approach, say, *King Lear*, is probably the biggest hurdle the burgeoning jazz scholarship must face.

"As a teacher of African-American literature almost before there were textbooks to use, I am myself a little shy about tearing it all down before it's even up there," says Robert O'Meally. "However, I think it's important, despite all shyness, to have enough confidence in these gods to believe that they can be rattled for a while. God knows Louis Armstrong can stand it."

DAVID YAFFE

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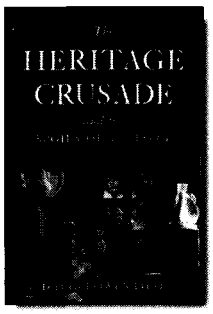

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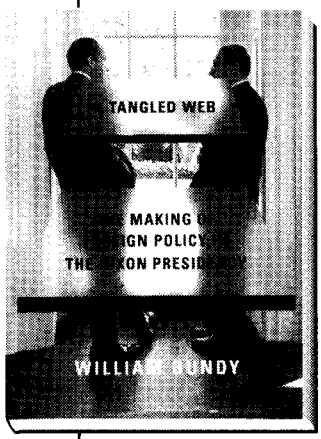

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GO ASK ALICE

THIS SUMMER, ACADEMICALLY astute moviegoers scratched their heads over one of Matt Damon's monologues in *Saving Private Ryan*. While awaiting a climactic battle with a Nazi battalion, Damon's Private Ryan tells an off-color story about a notoriously "ugly" girl in his hometown named Alice Jardine.

Is it just a coincidence that this fictional character's name also belongs to a well-known (and perfectly attractive) professor of French at Harvard University, a woman who specializes in semiotics and twentieth-century French feminist criticism? Certainly the fact that Damon attended Harvard for nearly three years—and that University of New Hampshire English professor Rachel Trubowitz is also alluded to unflatteringly in the film—suggests that something unusual is going on. At press time, *Lingua Franca* was unable to discover who planted these names in the script, or why. But we would very much like to know.

Meanwhile, Matt Damon fans can rest assured that one prominent academic is grateful to have been mentioned by the star. In the hit film *Good Will Hunting*, Damon lauded the work of Howard Zinn, the unabashedly radical historian, formerly of Boston University. As a result, Zinn has never been more in popular demand. This spring and summer, he twice jetted out to the left coast to negotiate terms under which the Fox Television Network would make a ten-hour dramatic series based on his *People's History of the United States*.

Damon, Ben Affleck, Chris Moore (a producer of *Good Will Hunting*), and Zinn are working out a deal in which they would serve as executive producers of a docudrama series that could air as early as 2000. "I've undertaken a job of sort of picking out themes," says the seventy-five-year-old historian and activist. "You can be sure there will be one on Columbus and the indigenous peoples, one on the Revolutionary War, one on slavery, one on class conflict."

Speaking of class conflict, the potential deal—"nothing has been signed," Zinn hastens to note—could result in one of the more odd couplings in contemporary American popular culture. Zinn is an unreconstructed leftist, while Rupert Murdoch, who owns the Fox Television Network, is a notorious archconservative. But Zinn, like most Fox viewers, isn't particularly concerned that Murdoch's tastes will intrude on the network's programming. After all, he observes, "the American system operates on the basis of a profit motive. And sometimes the profit motive supersedes ideology."

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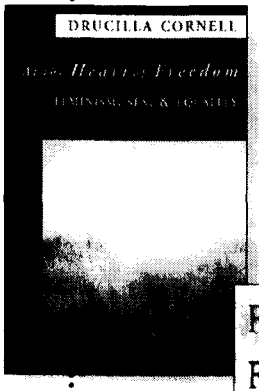

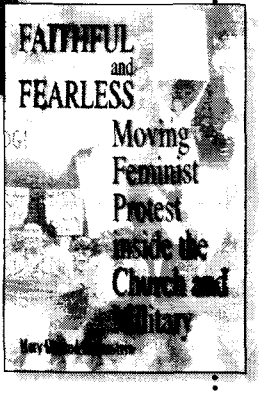

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Breakthrough *Books*

WE ASKED NINE EXPERTS TO COMMENT ON THE BEST RECENT BOOKS ABOUT **SPAIN AND ITS EMPIRE.**

Richard Kagan, professor of history at Johns Hopkins University and author of *Lucrecia's Dreams: Politics and Prophecy in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (California, 1990).

"Two of the best recent books address the relationship between ethnicity and religion. **David Nirenberg**'s *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1996) examines relationships among Christians, Muslims, and Jews in fourteenth-century Aragon. Conceptually brilliant, it launches a frontal attack on *convivencia*, the idea that the three religions of medieval Spain lived in peaceful coexistence. Rather, Nirenberg postulates a society—not unlike today's Jerusalem—in which racial tensions and violence formed part of the glue of everyday life. Equally valuable is the recent recovery of **Ahmad ibn Qasim al-Hajari**'s *Kitab Nasir al-Din 'ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin* (*The Supporter of Religion Against the Infidel*) (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1997). Published with the original Arabic alongside an English translation, this is the fascinating memoir of one of the *moriscos* (converted Muslims) expelled from Spain in 1609. Al-Hajari found his way to Paris and other parts of Europe, reminiscing about his former life and offering interesting insights about the different kinds of Christians he encountered during his travels."

Bruce Taylor, research affiliate at UCLA's Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies and author of *Armatures of Reform: The Mercedarian Order in the Spanish Golden Age* (Oxford, forthcoming).

"This year Spain celebrates another of its great international anniversaries—the four hundredth anniversary of the death of Philip II (1527-1598). Our assessment of the king is now greatly enhanced by **Henry Kamen**'s *Philip of Spain* (Yale, 1997), which succeeds in embracing the complexity of the subject while ignoring the narrow criteria and pernicious bias that have traditionally characterized biographies of the 'Prudent King.' That said, the 'Black Legend' of Spanish cruelty—in which Philip himself is seen as the chief malefactor—is hardly as prevalent in modern historiography as Kamen would have us believe, nor is he the first historian to have taken up the cudgels against it; witness **Geoffrey Parker**'s *Philip II* (Open Court, 1995) in particular. But Kamen's is the broadest vision to date, providing an example of what can be done through an expert survey of the immensely rich documentation that survives from this period in Spanish and foreign archives."

....

Stanley Payne, professor of history at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and co-author of *España y la Segunda Guerra Mundial (Spain and the Second World War)* (Editorial Universidad Complutense, 1996).

"The loss of most of its American empire in the 1820s had surprisingly little effect on Spain, caught as it was in a traumatic transition from a traditionalist regime to capitalist liberalism. The demise of the remains of the old empire in 1898, however, was something else entirely, and in this centenary year Spain is deluged with accounts of that last colonial war and losing struggle with the United States. The most important single volume of this outpouring is *Más se perdió en Cuba: España, 1898 y la crisis de fin de siglo (More Was Lost in Cuba: 1898 Spain and the Crisis of the Century's End)* (Alianza Editorial, 1998), edited by **Juan Pan-Montojo**, which considers the effect on Spain of the Cuban independence struggle and the Spanish-American War. The defeat was seen as a national humiliation that might lead to the downfall of the monarchy and the political system. It opened a period of domestic crisis and greatly accelerated a debate among intellectuals about national identity in the modern world."

....

Carolyn P. Boyd, professor of history at the University of Texas at Austin and author of *"Historia Patria": Politics, History, and National Identity in Spain, 1875-1975* (Princeton, 1997).

"Beginning with *Person and God in a Spanish Valley* (Princeton, 1989), the historian and anthropologist **William Christian** has written a series of influential books analyzing the ways in which ordinary Spaniards have sought access to the sacred. *Visionaries: The Spanish Republic and the Reign of Christ* (California, 1996), his latest and most remarkable work, examines multiple sightings of the Virgin Mary that broke out in the Basque country shortly after the proclamation of the secularizing and mildly anticlerical second republic in 1931. Employing printed and manuscript sources, as well as oral interviews with surviving seers, believers, and onlookers, Christian describes sympathetically but objectively the visions and the visionaries, and the social, cultural, and political forces that shaped their experience. The result is a masterful exploration of religious belief and behavior that not only provides a rich new perspective on Spain in the 1930s but also illuminates more generally the ways in which individuals and communities search for meaning, reassurance, and power."

....

Eric Van Young, professor of history at the University of California at San Diego and author of a manuscript titled "The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence and Ideology in Mexico, 1810-1821."

"In recent years the rich literature on Latin American social

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and cultural history has taken a turn toward 'subaltern' studies, examinations of resistance and rebellion and of the religious sensibilities of common people. In his thoughtful and well-researched ***The Power of God Against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century*** (Stanford, 1998), **Paul Vanderwood** explores a religious uprising by villagers in northern Mexico in the 1890s, the millennialist beliefs of its adherents, its brutal suppression by the government of Porfirio Díaz, and the relationship of the movement to the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Similarly insightful is the classic work of the Peruvian historian **Alberto Flores Galindo**, ***Buscando un Inca: Identidad y utopía en los Andes*** (Instituto de Apoyo Agrario, 1987), which links Inca revivalist and utopian thought both backward to the colonial period and forward to Peru's troubled twentieth-century political life."

••••

Paul Freedman, professor of history at Yale University and author of *The Image of the Medieval Peasant* (Stanford, forthcoming).

"***Medieval Iberia: Readings From Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*** (Pennsylvania, 1997), edited by **Olivia Remie Constable**, is a valuable new resource for teaching about medieval Spain. Translated writings by medieval monks, notaries, chroniclers, and government officials depict everyday life and politics, affording a vivid picture of the collision and coexistence of different cultural worlds. While the diversity of medieval Spain is emphasized, its history is effectively integrated into a European and Mediterranean context, combating the tendency to see Iberia as peripheral to both European Christianity and Islam. The collection is an excellent complement to **David Nirenberg**'s ***Communities of Violence***. By looking at Jewish-Muslim relations, Nirenberg avoids the distortion, often imposed by sources from the governing (Christian) authority, of viewing medieval life in terms of Christians versus minorities."

••••

Thomas B.F. Cummins, professor of art history at the University of Chicago and author of *Toasts With the Inca: Andean Abstraction and Colonial Images on Kero Vessels* (Michigan, forthcoming).

"**Vicente Rafael**'s ***Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule*** (Cornell, 1988) is a beautifully written book, capturing the ironic twists and spins that are put on Christian doctrine and language instruction in the Philippines by those who are instructed. In 1492 Antonio de Nebrija confidently wrote in his Spanish Grammar that 'language was always the companion of Empire,' but as Rafael demonstrates, the act of colonial translation is a decidedly two-way street that escapes the intentions of imperial logic. **Jeanette Peterson**'s ***The Paradise Garden Murals of Malinalco: Utopia and Empire in Sixteenth-Century Mexico*** (Texas, 1993) is an equally stimulating book, richly articulating the creation of colonial images within the context of Christian conversion. Focusing on one monastery, she analyzes the multiple and contradictory layers of meaning that native artists found in Aztec and Spanish pictorial forms and iconographies."

••••

David J. Weber, professor of history at Southern Methodist University and author of *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (Yale, 1992).

"Whatever the Spanish empire was, it is also what we remember it to have been. In today's United States, past and present seem to conjoin in the plazas of refurbished Spanish 'old' towns, from San Diego to San Antonio to St. Augustine. The historic ambience that these sites evoke, however, is largely a twentieth-century creation. No one has explained the making of these 'preserved' towns better than **Chris Wilson**, whose ***The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition*** (New Mexico, 1997) analyzes the political, economic, and cultural contexts of Santa Fe's Spanish pueblo 'revival' and the reinvention of Hispanic arts, crafts, and public ceremony. As the makers of the myth intended, today's romantic Santa Fe conveys a sense of timelessness and ethnic harmony. Wilson, however, finds deep class and cultural fissures between Hispanics, Pueblos, and Anglos, and he raises disturbing questions about the invention of Spanish tradition."

••••

Esther Allen, translator of Rosario Castellanos's *The Book of Lamentations* (Penguin, 1998) and co-translator of *The Selected Nonfiction of Jorge Luis Borges* (Viking, forthcoming).

"Recently, in Spain's leading newspaper, the exiled Cuban literary luminary Guillermo Cabrera Infante bemoaned the lackluster Latin American generation that succeeded the famous Boom of the 1960s, and named two novelists from Spain, Fernando Savater and **Javier Marías**, as among the best now writing in Spanish. Add to that list Eduardo Mendoza and Arturo Pérez Reverte, and you have the core of a new Boom, but one originating in Spain. Curiously, its impact has yet to be felt in the United States. This is particularly mysterious in the case of Marías, one of the most acclaimed European writers of his generation. Though Marías's ***A Heart So White*** (Harvill, 1995), translated by **Margaret Jull Costa**, was in 1997 awarded the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award for the best novel translated into English, and though his work is deeply indebted to *Tristram Shandy*—which he translated—and the novels of Henry James, Marías remains virtually unknown here. But be warned: The Spaniards are coming."

JOHN PALATTELLA

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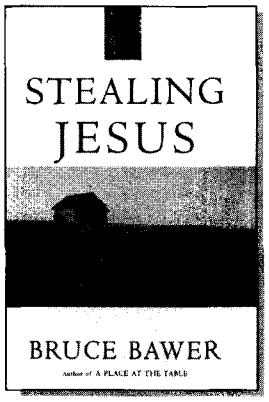

Stealing Jesus

How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity

by Bruce Bawer

"*Stealing Jesus* may prove of value simply for its clear exposition of what today's American 'fundamentalists' believe and want to do. Bawer's readers will no longer be able to greet that term with a condescending smile."
—*New York Times Book Review*

The critically acclaimed author of *A Place At the Table* points out that the supposedly "traditional" beliefs of American fundamentalism—about which most mainstream Christians, clergy included, know shockingly little—are in fact of relatively recent origin, are distinctively American in many ways, and are dramatically at odds with the values that Jesus actually spread. Bawer fascinatingly demonstrates the way in which these beliefs have increasingly come to supplant genuinely fundamental Christian tenets in the American church and to become synonymous with Christianity in the minds of many people.

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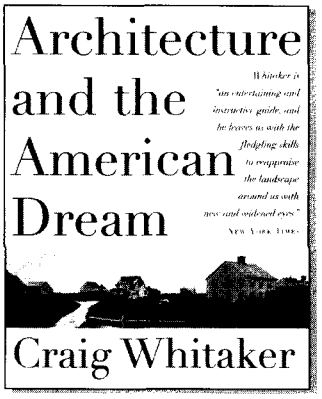

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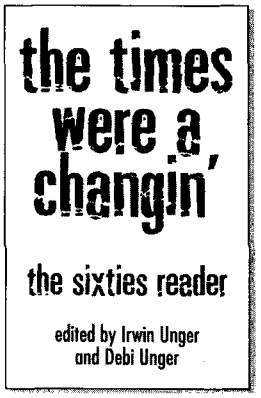

The Times Were a Changin'

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Inside*Publishing*

SCHOOL TIES

IF KIMBERLEY CORNISH, THE AUTHOR OF *THE Jew of Linz*, is to be believed, six million Jewish lives might have been spared had it not been for an indiscreet Jewish boy who attended high school with Adolf Hitler, and who made young Adolf hate the Jews.

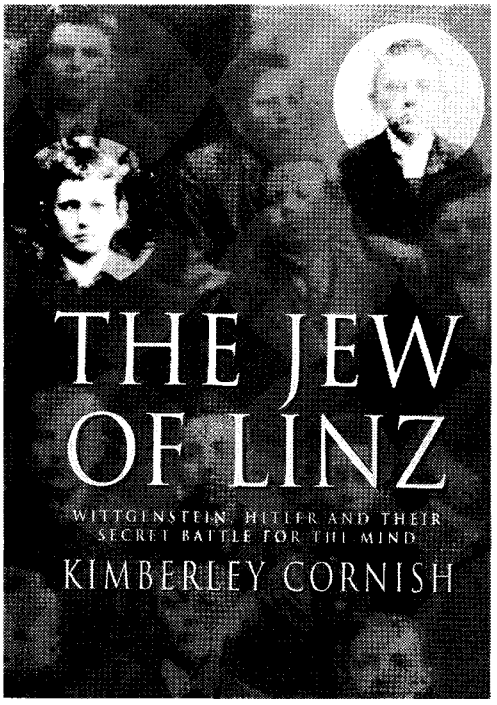
Absurd? Sure, but not uniquely so. As the historian John Lukacs and the journalist Ron Rosenbaum have recently reminded us, childhood-trauma theories about the Führer's anti-Semitism abound in the field of Hitler studies. Trauma theorists typically paint Hitler as a man eternally haunted by a lone Jewish tormentor, whether it's the Jewish doctor who may have botched his mother's cancer treatment, the Jewish teacher who supposedly broke his half niece's heart and caused her suicide, or the Jewish prostitute who may have given him syphilis. So now it's a schoolmate. So what?

But wait. It gets weirder. Even by the exacting standards of Wacky Hitlerology, Cornish breaks new ground. According to Cornish, Hitler's teenage adversary was no ordinary Austrian Jew. It was Ludwig Wittgenstein.

"Something happened between Hitler and Wittgenstein," writes Cornish, who is described on the book's jacket as a graduate of the University of Western Australia and a former student of the anarchist philosopher Paul Feyerabend. Indeed. "We face...the astounding possibility that the course of the twentieth century was radically influenced by a quarrel between two schoolboys." You got it: no Wittgenstein, no Holocaust.

Not surprisingly, Cornish's book caused a stir in England when it was published last March by Century Books, an imprint of Random House. (The cover is a group photograph of Hitler and his schoolmates in Linz, one of whom, Cornish maintains, is Wittgenstein.) *The Sunday Times* excerpted the book, and a number of drolly dismissive commentaries ran in *The Guardian*, *The Economist*, *The New Statesman*, and *The Times Literary Supplement*. And while nobody took the book seriously, the publicity itself was an extraordinary coup for an unknown author whose manuscript nearly got buried in Random House's slush pile. "It was a great idea—that these two great people in history had been inspired by each other, as it were," explains Century Books assistant editor Liz Rowlinson. "Of course there are flaws in the argument, but it is a great piece of historical detective work."

How, then, does Sherlock build his case? It goes like this: Sometime in 1904, Wittgenstein and Hitler befriend each other at the Realschule in Linz, drawn together by their mutual interests in Schopenhauer and music. The upper-class, assimilated Jew—"forceful and used to commanding servants and expressing [himself] in High German"—introduces his lower-middle-class buddy to Eastern mysticism, Madame Blavatsky's theosophy, and embryonic formulations of his masterwork on language. "For some unknown but historically crucial reason," Cornish explains, the friendship crumbles, and Hitler projects his hatred for "the apostate Jew" and his wealthy family onto the Jewish people.



Did Hitler's dislike of Ludwig Wittgenstein cause the Holocaust?

In order to fight Wittgenstein, Hitler devises Nazi metaphysics, a version of "Wittgenstein's theory of the mind modified so as to exclude the race of its inventor." Wittgenstein's influence serves him well: Drawing on his enemy's magical insights into the social nature of language, Hitler is able to "develop the powers of fascination" that hypnotize the German masses.

Fortunately, Wittgenstein stands ready to oppose him. With almost telepathic awareness of Hitler's ascendancy, Wittgenstein leaves Vienna for Cambridge in 1929, in order to offer his services to the Russians. The Russians try to woo him with a post at the University of Kazan in 1935, but he has grander things in mind. He thinks to himself, his words helpfully intuited by Cornish, "Yes, I can help. I'll select the people who, in my judgement, can further the cause

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of the only international organization that stands for armed opposition to Hitler; I will back the Comintern!" And so Wittgenstein becomes the notorious "fifth man," the Cambridge spymaster who recruits his fellow homosexuals Kim Philby, Anthony Blunt, and Guy Burgess to Stalin's cause. And how does he pull it off? Through (what else?) his obscure but enchanting philosophy, the force of which leads to his students' "adopting Communism as a religious revelation."

It's been known for some time that Hitler and Wittgenstein overlapped one year at the Realschule. But did they ever meet? "I know of no evidence that they were in the same classes or that they ever knew each other," says Ray Monk, Wittgenstein's biographer. Cornish concedes the point but brandishes what he believes to be a reference to Wittgenstein in *Mein Kampf*—a passage about a "Jewish boy who was treated by all of us with caution, but only because various experiences had led us to doubt his discretion and we did not particularly trust him." There were fifteen Jews at the Realschule, Cornish admits, but Wittgenstein was hands down the best candidate for ostracism: "How could any other student have stood out more from the rest than a homosexual, truss-wearing, stuttering, Austrian equivalent of a Carnegie, a Krupp or Rothschild?"

> If Cornish had his way, we would speak not of anti-Semitism, but of anti-Wittgensteinism.

In any case, evidence isn't the point here. According to a well-established rule of occult history—a rule that holds doubly true in the absence of empirical proof—the paths of canonical figures living within a twenty-mile radius must have converged, and must have converged fatefully. As Cornish puts it in his clinching argument, "Each was possessed of a personality so dominating as to count as remarkable within twentieth-century history."

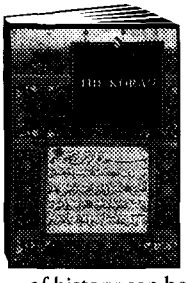
There is another, equally important rule in occult history: A tortured explanation is always preferable to a simple one. In *The Jew of Linz*, all roads, however circuitous, must lead to Wittgenstein and his family.

Why did Hitler adore Wagner? Where historians point to Wagner's romantic nationalism, his bullying aesthetics, and, not least, his anti-Semitism, Cornish says the real reason was Wagner's hatred of the Wittgensteins. In the great debate over the

Classic Literature, Classic Culture

The Koran

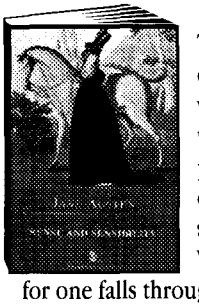
translated by J.M. Rodwell



The Koran, the holy scripture of Islam, is a record of Muhammed's oral teachings delivered between A.D. 622 and the year of his death in A.D. 632. *The Koran's* great influence over the course of history can be seen in many of the finest products of genius and learning. Other great philosophical and religious works by authors such as Descartes, Kant, Locke, Rousseau and Voltaire can also be found under the Everyman Paperback Classics label. *(Everyman Paperback Classics) paperback, 20% discounted price: $3.96**

Sense and Sensibility

by Jane Austen



This is Austen's classic tale of two well-bred sisters who must prepare themselves for genteel poverty within 19th century England's snobbish upper class. When a marriage prospect for one falls through, it is up to the sensible elder sister to hold the family together, while harboring a secret longing of her own. Find more Jane Austen titles, as well as works by other 18th and 19th century British authors, under the Everyman Paperback Classics label. *(Everyman Paperback Classics) paperback, 20% discounted price: $3.96**

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future of German music, Wagner had a falling-out with his friend Joseph Joachim, the violin virtuoso. A Hungarian Jew, Joachim had been adopted at the age of twelve by none other than Wittgenstein's grandfather. Wagner's wife, Cosima, also, it turns out, had reason to despise the Wittgensteins, since her father, Liszt, had had an affair with one of Wittgenstein's aunts. Concludes Cornish: "Hitler's infatuation with Wagner might well have been sustained by...Hitler's (reasonable) belief that Wagner, too, hated Wittgensteins." If Cornish had his way, we would speak not of anti-Semitism, but of anti-Wittgensteinism.

Ditto for anti-Communism. It turns out that Wittgenstein's ideas were a shaping, albeit secret, influence in the international Communist movement—a kind of "mental socialism." Why else would the Russians have offered him that job?

There is, to be sure, a simple explanation for the Russian proposal. As Monk notes, "Wittgenstein was perceived as one of the world's greatest philosophers, and it would have been a great coup for any regime to have him. The Soviet authorities probably offered him the job as a courtesy to John Maynard Keynes, who was friendly with Ivan Maiskii, the Russian ambassador." But Cornish thinks such an explanation is far too simplistic. In debunking the notion of a wholly private language and in positing a "no-ownership theory of mind," he says, Wittgenstein advanced the cause of Bolshevik collectivism among the intelligentsia. And far from detracting from his appeal to the Soviets, Wittgenstein's opacity was of supreme strategic value, as alluringly lofty as dialectical materialism was grubbily concrete. The results were far-reaching. "Wittgensteinian influence," Cornish observes, "had a role to play in producing Australia's own spy, Ian Milner." One wonders what Cornish would make of the Rosenberg letters, in which traces of Wittgenstein's influence have not yet been discerned.

If you read Cornish's book for too long a sitting, you may find yourself seized by his delirium and asking all sorts of questions. How did ordinary Germans come to share Hitler's hatred of the Wittgensteins? Was the fall of Stalinism a defeat for Wittgenstein's thought? Do anti-Wittgensteinians in philosophy departments present an imminent genocidal threat? If so, should there be Wittgenstein-tolerance seminars? Is Steven Spielberg interested in getting involved?

Such questions leave us speechless, which is, of course, exactly how Wittgenstein would have it.

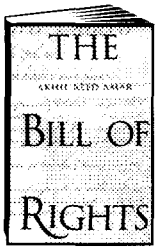
ADAM SHATZ

and Classic Conundrums

The Bill of Rights

Creation and Reconstruction

by Akhil Reed Amar



Yale Professor of Law, Akhil Reed Amar invites citizens to take an in-depth look at our most basic charter of liberty, the Bill of Rights. Amar contends that with the Fourteenth Amendment, Americans underwent a new birth of freedom that transformed the old Bill of Rights and as a result has given us a document that guards against self-interested government and protects the minority against the majority. *(Yale Univ. Press) hardcover, 20% discounted price: $24.00**

Fermat's Enigma

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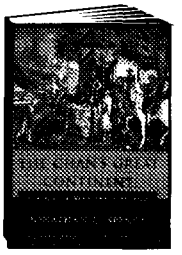

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GAY BROADWAY

GAY STUDIES OF POPULAR CULTURE TEND either to celebrate or to castigate: Madonna and opera are good; rap music and Mel Gibson are bad. The task of criticism seems to be to encourage us to choose the good—in this case, the "positive" or politically progressive. It is against this tendency that D.A. Miller's *Place for Us,* out this month from Harvard University Press, seems to be written. Miller's "essay on the Broadway musical" anatomizes a sentimental and cliché-ridden mass-cultural form that Miller frankly admits no politically savvy individual would willingly embrace. Instead, he argues, the classic Broadway musical chooses its audience, selecting, as a tigress does the slowest antelope in the herd, gay men as the easiest prey.

ETHEL MERMAN

Miller, a professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University, is something of an expert on the complex effects of modern culture on those who consume it. He achieved academic celebrity with his 1988 study, *The Novel and the Police,* a book whose elegant account of the Victorian novel's manipulative engagement with its readers remains a defining text of New Historicism. Whereas *The Novel and the Police* argued that the Victorian triple-decker schooled its readership in the dubious norms of nineteenth-century individualism ("Every reader must realize the definitive fantasy of the liberal subject, who imagines himself free from the surveillance that he nonetheless sees operating everywhere around him"), *Place for Us* proceeds from the more generous proposition that the Broadway musical has not only inspired twentieth-century gay men but understood their dilemma. From this perspective, the musical's silliness and incongruities—the buoyant optimism of its heroes and heroines in the face of overwhelming adversity (think of those smiling, singing orphans in *Annie*) and the flimsy pretexts with which it moves from narrative to musical numbers—become resonant conceits, reflecting gay-male unease in a world in which their welcome is flimsy in its own way, ever contingent on heterosexual largesse.

That such a relic of the pre-emancipated world of the closet as the splashy Broadway show can still speak to the post-Stonewall man is Miller's central thesis. And it's a thesis that's more paradoxical than one might think. After all, the musical—a genre whose gay "code" is an open secret and whose leading exponents have included many gay men—in fact preaches a gospel of wholesome heterosexuality. Or, as George Costanza insists in a famous episode of *Seinfeld*: "It's *Guys and Dolls,* not *Guys and Guys.*" So how has a medium that endlessly sanctifies "heterosexual obligation" in its "old-fashioned marriages and pajama games" come to be the uterine source for the reproduction of countless gay men? How, in other words, has it become this "somehow gay genre, the only one that mass culture ever produced"?

Miller's answer is as astute as it is aphoristic: The Broadway show displaces the gay male's forbidden performance of his desire with a desire for performance. For the gay man, Miller suggests, the discovery of the musical has something of the inevitability of puberty. "The archaeology of the post-war gay male subject," he writes, "regularly turns up a cache of original cast albums.... Boys des-

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MARY MARTIN IN SOUTH PACIFIC

tined...to be *musical* would descend into the *basement* of their parents' home, and there they would sing and dance to recorded Broadway music." This rite has always directed its participants toward a certain "solitary condition" that neither gay marriage nor gay softball teams can fully dissolve. However pleasurable these latter dividends of life after Stonewall, they cannot dispel the joy first experienced in that basement, "the act of vibrating sympathetically to the numbers." Not even the community-building boosterism of the gay liberation movement fully compensates for the knowledge that one's desire (including the desire to act out) must be kept secret. The once and future show queen is never "so overwhelmed by his passion that he forg[ets] to manage the secrecy in which he indulged it." This balancing act of exultation and repression is the real number done on gay men by the basements of their youth.

How did the Broadway musical become the only gay genre mass culture has ever produced?

No one seems to have mastered the basement lesson as expertly as the many "architects" of Broadway, who, in keeping out gay content, infuse their productions with gay sensibility instead. "The whole enormous population of gay composers, lyricists, librettists, choreographers," Miller writes, "dexterously striking the sexual specificities of their experience with the wand of worldly ambition, cause these to evaporate into a cloud of nuance." (Example: "The Seabee chorus of *South Pacific* may revel in a hearty he-man horniness, but when it extols women's breasts...its members thrust forward their own luscious bare pectorals.") The audience's identification with the figures on stage becomes a complex transaction, fraught with ambiguities of gender and desire. The musical's spectators "at a certain moment cease to be simply watching," say, Maria's paean to herself in *West Side Story,* "I Feel Pretty" ("and witty and gay"), "and begin...to imitate it"—miming her gestures from the comfortable remove of their seats. And while all mass media invite us to imitate the stars we adore, Broadway is unique in locating this imitation almost exclusively in female—or, if the singer is a man, in unmistakably feminized—performance.

For this reason, *Gypsy* (1959) occupies a special place in Miller's book; not only was it the "favorite" musical of the author's childhood, but also it can be read as a parable of the genre. *Gypsy*'s plot revolves around a mother's drive to launch her children on the vaudeville circuit and the transformation of one of those children, Louise, into Gypsy Rose Lee, the legendary stripper. Long before this ascent, however, Louise is conscripted by her mother into the role of Boy Louise and required for "the sake of the act" to stand back while her more effulgent sister hogs the spotlight. Miller distills from Louise's onstage exile an allegory of how Broadway dispenses the privilege to perform along gendered lines. As Louise's turn on stage requires her to shed all traces of her ill-fitting boy drag, so the musical itself demands that gay men surrender all prospect of masculinity as the price of admission to the feminine domain of performance. The female performer is, as she bursts into song, what every gay man desires to be: the object of male desire. And since every show unwaveringly orbits a female star, its command to hum its tunes and sway to its rhythms deprives even the most stoically heterosexual men in the audience of the "masculine reserve" to withstand the "implicit transvestism of the form"—a "femininity become their own." Nobody, however straight, can fail to be bent by the inducement "to find himself"—if only "in the privacy of the shower," Miller argues—"washing that man right out of his hair."

While academic criticism is often unintentionally hilarious, it rarely rises to the genuinely funny. Miller has a knack for making good points with good jokes. Wouldn't we have been better off, he muses, if in place of the 1940s musical's bid to legitimize itself with the "naturalism" of Clifford Odets or Arthur Miller, these latter figures had adapted the chorus line and showstopping finale to plays like *Waiting for Lefty* and *Death of A Salesman*? But Miller's humor here shouldn't surprise us. Given the compromises required of a professor writing about such an abasing medium as Broadway, he carries the show with a bravura worthy of Merman herself. And like La Merm, he compels us at the same time to take his song and dance in earnest.

MICHAEL TRASK

PHOTOFEST

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WITHOUT EXPLANATION

WHEN JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS HIRED Willis Regier as its director in 1995, the most audible murmurings of complaint came from Nebraska, which was sorry to see him go. In his eight years as director of University of Nebraska Press, Regier nearly tripled its title output, to 120 books a year; weaned the press from its university subsidy; and launched several high-profile series, including the French Modernist Library, best known for publishing surrealist writers such as André Breton and Louis Aragon. He also brought in big-name contemporary authors like Jacques Derrida, inaugurated a print and electronic journals program, and generally transformed the press from an obscure backwater into one of the largest and most respected university publishers. Graham Spanier, who was then chancellor of the University of Nebraska and is now President of Penn State, says that Regier "always put the press first, always shared credit, and was as modest as they come. I considered him one of our best ambassadors and one of the university's finest leaders."

It's no surprise, then, that brows furrowed across the country this May when word spread that, three years into his tenure at Johns Hopkins, Regier was asked to resign on grounds of incompatibility with members of the press's executive staff. Though Regier signed up a great many successful titles for Hopkins, including Shimon Peres's *For the Future of Israel* and Hershel Parker's *Herman Melville* (he was also proposing to publish a book edited by *Lingua Franca* on the Alan Sokal hoax), the office politics did not play in his favor. Says Regier, "The vice provost concluded that there was enough tension between me and these people that the best way to resolve it was through my resignation."

Of course, editors are let go all the time. But the recent turn of events at Johns Hopkins has been shrouded in a particularly thick fog of mystery. Asked whether Regier was warned of the mounting opposition to his leadership or provided an opportunity to resolve the problems, Vice Provost Stephen McClain says "no." At the same time, asked whether Regier resigned or was fired, McClain told *Lingua Franca,* "That gets into a level of nuance that I don't think is germane."

So, why is Regier gone? Privately, members of the senior staff allude to problems—but the allusions are vague and often contradictory. More than one of Regier's former colleagues claims that the press director spent too much time acquiring new books and not enough time on—what? "A vision for the list as a whole," says one middle manager. "Mundane, businesslike aspects," says another. Accounts of Regier's priorities as an editor vary just as widely. Doug Armato, associate director of book publishing under Regier (and now director of University of Minnesota Press), says the press director was "less interested in the scholarly sides of the list. His program was very market driven." But another source at Johns Hopkins says the opposite was true—the books Regier acquired weren't marketable enough: "He was acquiring a lot of French translations that don't sell." It's almost as though the story of Regier's brief tenure at Hopkins is a Rorschach blot that reveals more about the priorities of the person examining it than about Regier himself.

Perhaps the most widely cited charge against Regier is that, as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported in July, he was ill equipped to manage a press of Hopkins' size and complexity. After all, Johns Hopkins is nothing like Nebraska. The nation's oldest continuously operating university press has had only five directors since it was founded. Its book division produces close to two hundred books a year; its journals division publishes forty-five scholarly journals, including *MLN, World Politics,* and *Diacritics;* and its third arm, a services division, provides warehousing, shipping, accounting, and customer service for many other presses. Surely, the magnitude of Johns Hopkins's operations would have presented challenges to a new director. Says Armato, "Hopkins is a place with a lot of traditions, and Bill came in more impressed with other models. He wanted to turn the press into something else."

Why did the Johns Hopkins press force out its director?

And yet, if Regier was overwhelmed by running a press with three divisions, this did not manifest itself on a material level. The fiscal year ending June 31, 1998 was strong in all three divisions—for the book division, it was the best the press has ever had.

Regier has had a lot of time since May to mull it all over. For his part, he suspects that his most controversial move was to set the goal of making the press's book division financially self-supporting. Traditionally, the journals and services divisions produced surpluses, which were then used to cover operating deficits in the book division. "This was a bad policy," Regier insists. "It

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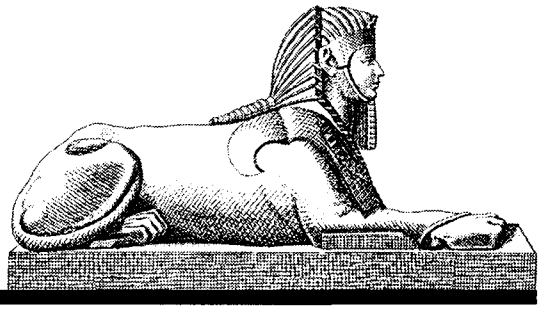
sapped money from divisions that needed it. With some tinkering and one change in the editorial program, the book division could be made self-supporting, and each division would have more income to support its own planning and programming needs." The change Regier had in mind was a significantly bulked-up paperback-reprints program. Along with Armato and acquisitions editor Bob Brugger, Regier quadrupled the number of paperback reprints Hopkins acquired from other presses. Among the program's more successful titles were Giacomo Casanova's 12-volume *History of My Life;* Louis Ginzberg's *The Legends of the Jews;* and Walter McDougall's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age.*

According to Armato, the goal of a self-supporting book division was widely shared. "That had been a goal for as long as I can remember," he says. A senior employee in the journals division agreed without hesitation that a self-supporting book division was "a noble thing to aspire to. It would only work to our benefit." But Armato expressed skepticism about Regier's timing: Given what he calls "a severe dip in the market for scholarly books" over the past few years, he says, "it's a tough time to change direction for anyone." And indeed, not everyone thought a self-supporting division was a good idea. Interim press director Jack Goellner, who directed the press for twenty-one years before Regier's arrival on the scene (and whose wife, Barbara Lamb, is its managing editor), says: "It does not matter at all whether one division or another division is self-sustaining or profitable. This is one university press with one balance sheet. The university mandates that the press as a whole operate without subsidy or deficit. This is the university's concern, and in my judgment it is a proper concern." As for the paperback reprints program, Goellner says its merit can only be judged when its sales figures are in. "Reprinting paperback books is hardly a service to scholarship," he says. "It can be justified only by demand,



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A former professor, Jeffrey M. Duban received his Ph.D. in Classical Philology from Johns Hopkins in 1975.

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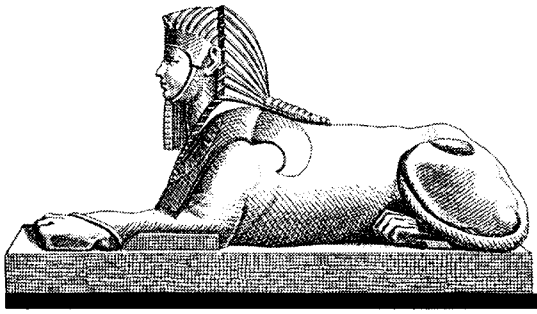
which can be measured only by salability."

As Regier contemplates his options, many staff members are baffled by the situation—and some are angry that Regier was neither informed of the specific grounds for his dismissal nor given a chance to improve his performance. Says one, "That Regier always dealt with everyone with humanity throws into relief how poorly he was treated." Michael Jensen, who followed Regier from Nebraska to Hopkins and is now director of publishing technologies at National Academy Press, calls his former boss "a brilliant man who was mistreated by the administration." When Regier was hired, Jensen says, "he said what he'd do, he did it, and succeeded at doing it. As a consequence, he was fired." Across the board, Regier's supporters and detractors alike praise his editorial skills. Even McClain calls him "one of the finest people I have ever come into contact with."

What observers find particularly perplexing is the haste with which Regier was dismissed and with which his replacement is expected to be hired. French professor Stephen Nichols, who recently stepped down from the press's faculty committee, says, "One doesn't like to think the administration acted without cause. But there are unanswered questions having to do with the speed with which this was done." Regier was fired in May, a month during which, says Nichols, most faculty members are away. And the search for his replacement was aimed to conclude after three months—before the faculty returns. The search that brought Regier to campus took almost three times that long. As for the applicant pool, some press insiders say its quality is higher than ever—but others say exactly the opposite.

Regier, who has not yet decided whether he will pursue another publishing job, return to academia, or look for work at a nonprofit foundation, has taken the summer to forge ahead on a project he has long had in the works. It should put his Hopkins experience to good use: He is writing a book about the Sphinx.

LAURA SECOR



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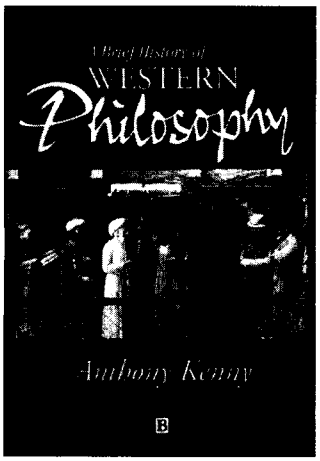

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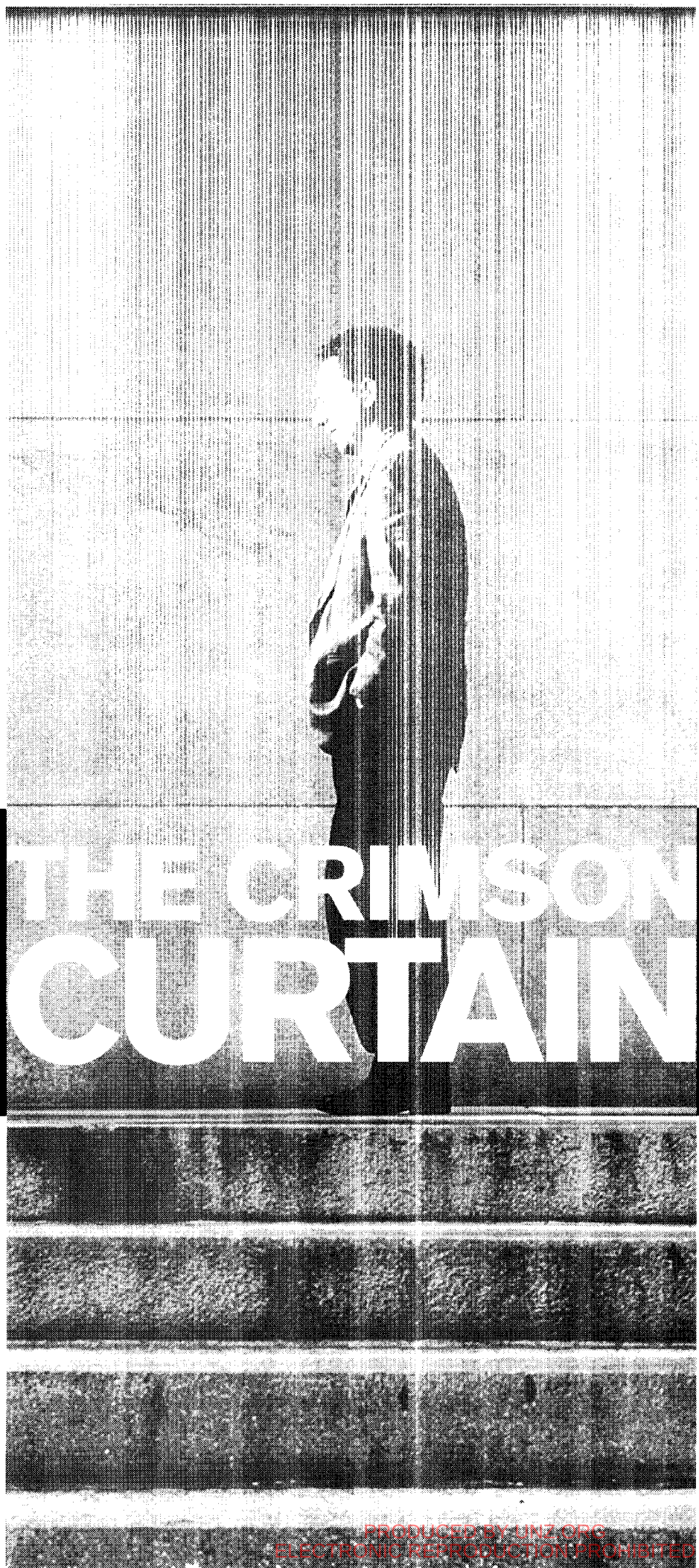

THE CRIMSON CURTAIN

DENIED TENURE, A JUNIOR PROFESSOR AT HARVARD FIGHTS BACK

BY **DAVID GREENBERG**

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1

On Monday, October 6, 1997, at 4 o'clock, Peter Berkowitz, a thirty-eight-year-old political theorist at Harvard, walked across the law school campus to Hauser Hall, a gleaming new building. Making his way up to a fourth-floor office, he found a plush green chair in the corner of the room and sat down. He had come to see Charles Nesson, the Weld Professor of Law, in the hope that Nesson could help him.

The two men began to talk, and Nesson reached down and switched on a tape recorder. Berkowitz flinched. "It's okay," Nesson said. Their conversation, he assured Berkowitz, was protected by attorney-client privilege. "You can trust me."

Berkowitz proceeded to recount his tale. The previous February, he and a fellow political theorist named Bonnie Honig had been nominated for tenure by Harvard's government department, only to have the university's president, Neil Rudenstine, veto the promotions. Allegations of behind-the-scenes intrigue swept across the campus and into the national newspapers. At the time, it was Honig's case—seized on as an example of Harvard's poor record of tenuring women—that stole the headlines. So when Honig landed a job at Northwestern, the storm seemed to pass.

But Berkowitz had heard intimations about his own case—that his promotion had been sabotaged at high levels. All through the spring and summer, he vacillated about whether to do something about it, not even sure what his options were. Quietly, he nursed a suspicion that he had been wronged.

Since Nesson agreed to take up Berkowitz's cause last October, the unlikely pair—the flamboyant attorney and the soft-spoken political philosopher—have fought a protracted battle against the Harvard administration. Of course, junior professors everywhere are familiar with situations like Berkowitz's. When you've been denied tenure, it's hard to avoid both the suspicion that someone has wronged you and the desire to vindicate yourself. But the Berkowitz affair is not only about the dilemmas of the disappointed professor. It has also cast a spotlight on the notoriously gruseling process by which Harvard grants tenure. And it has illuminated the costs and benefits of making tenure decisions behind closed doors at any school—a subject that Berkowitz, as a theorist of issues of fairness and power, was well-positioned to address. As it has unfolded, the entire story has become a public, and frequently bizarre, spectacle—one including the bold use of the Internet, a brigade of zealous law students, and even President Clinton's favorite private eye.

2

No one in his right mind should expect to get tenure at Harvard. Though the school's junior ranks are stocked with dazzling prodigies, only about one in five gets the treasured promotion. The university justifies these cruel statistics by insisting that its full professors be of world-class caliber, and few young scholars, however accomplished, can claim that status. In practice, this allows the university to get away with denying tenure to almost anyone, for if after six years you can't prove definitively that you're the best in your field, you have no grounds for complaint.

The lofty standard exists to preserve Harvard's reputation, to skim off the extraordinary from the merely excellent. But in its quest for world-class professors, Harvard often ends up making world-class blunders. Recently, for example, it has turned away such stellar tenure aspirants as historians Alan Brinkley (now at Columbia) and Patricia Nelson Limerick (Colorado) and sociologists Theda Skocpol (now back at Harvard) and Paul Starr (Princeton), the last of whom had won a Pulitzer Prize even before his tenure review. All have gone on to achieve great eminence in their respective fields. In these and other cases, Harvard's high standards prompted noisy recriminations, demoralizing junior professors and dividing departments. In Skocpol's case, the university was forced to reverse its decision after an internal grievance committee found evidence of sex discrimination.

Harvard's president maintains that applying the most rigorous standards, even in the face of the occasional outcry, is essential to his job and to Harvard's greatness. "On the tenure decisions," Rudenstine says, "I've certainly had enough complaints here and again. At the same time, if the next one that comes along looks like one I should turn down, I'm sure going to turn it down. Not that I relish turning them down. But it's the most fundamental thing I do having to do with the integrity of the institution and its values."

Junior professors at Harvard generally get considered for tenure in their seventh year on the faculty. During that anxiety-ridden period, a candidate endures more scrutiny than a petitioner for national security clearance: Your life's work is assessed and debated in a multistage process shrouded in secrecy. You can ascend from one stage to the next never knowing when it might suddenly be all over.

The process is so complicated that even many professors don't know all the steps. First, a subcommittee from your department peruses your dossier, which consists of your publications, teaching evaluations, and confidential letters solicited from experts in your field. Then, your department as a whole gathers to vote on whether it wants to promote you. Next, the dean of the faculty of arts and sciences reviews your dossier, briefed by a second set of confidential letters. If the dean approves you, a special ad hoc committee is convened. This committee usually consists of three experts in your field from outside Harvard, as well as two senior Harvard professors from outside your department. The identities of the committee members, and the outcome of their deliberations, are held in strict secrecy. Finally, regardless of the committee's vote, the president can approve or veto your candidacy.

From the day his journey began in July 1996—when the government department chair, Kenneth Shepsle, asked him if he wanted to go for tenure—Peter Berkowitz believed, as he put it, "that while the odds were against my getting tenure, I had a fighting chance." He was widely considered an accomplished scholar, a talented teacher, and something of a public intellectual. He started compiling his dossier: his first book, *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist,* published by Harvard University Press in 1995; a manuscript of his second book, about the role of virtue in liberal thought, which Princeton University Press had just agreed to publish; and numerous articles and reviews in journals from *The Yale*

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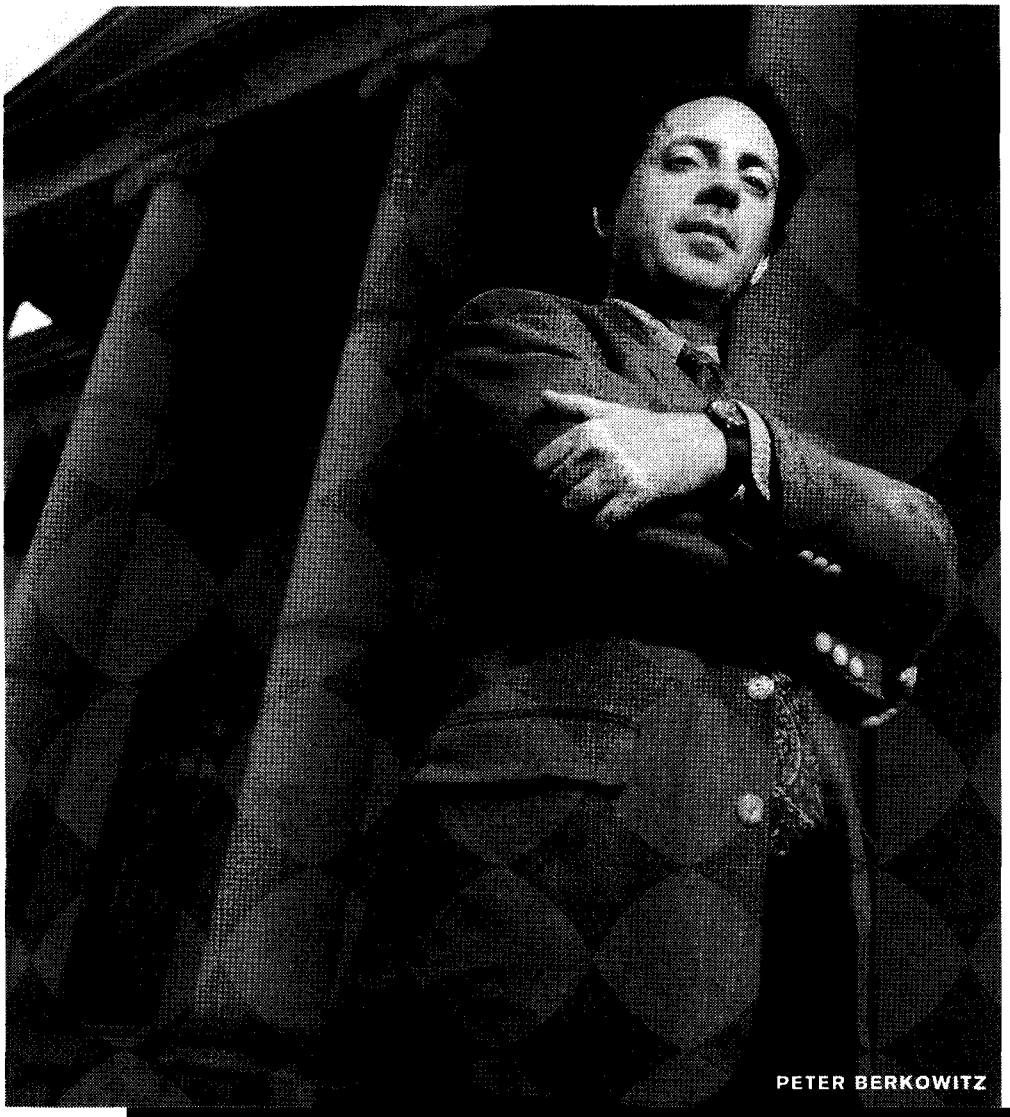

PETER BERKOWITZ

DANA SMITH

articles," says a senior government department colleague. "He takes no prisoners. He destroys people with a few sentences, and it's well deserved in most cases."

In another respect, though, Berkowitz was a decidedly peculiar choice to review the book. Dennis Thompson, after all, was a senior member of the Harvard government department, and would be exercising considerable influence over Berkowitz's future there. Nor was Thompson an ordinary faculty member. He directed a program housed in Harvard's Kennedy School of Government called Ethics and the Professions and was the newly appointed associate provost of the university. He also happened to be a close personal friend, for more than twenty-five years, of Harvard president Neil Rudenstine.

Berkowitz knew the dangers of taking on a powerful senior colleague. But, he calculated, he couldn't count on winning tenure at Harvard, and a review of an important book in a high-profile national magazine certainly might help him land a job elsewhere. He might even get points for courage. He also had a mischievous thought: Since Thompson was, broadly speaking, a mainstream liberal in his philosophy, and Berkowitz a critic of mainstream liberalism, he figured Thompson would likely oppose his tenure bid anyway. Thus, the review could make Thompson's opposition seem suspect. In sum, Berkowitz says, "I determined the potential benefits outweighed the potential costs."

ONE COLLEAGUE TOLD BERKOWITZ THAT HIS BOOK REVIEW WAS "BRILLIANT BUT SUICIDAL."

Law Journal to *The Public Interest*. On October 15, Berkowitz turned the dossier over to the department—and with it, the fate of his career at Harvard.

Perhaps the most significant item in the dossier was a review, at that point still unpublished, that Berkowitz had written for *The New Republic* magazine. The subject was a book called *Democracy and Disagreement: Why Moral Conflict Cannot Be Avoided in Politics, and What Should Be Done About It* (Harvard) by Amy Gutmann and Dennis F. Thompson. Like other works in the burgeoning subfield of liberal political theory called deliberative democracy, *Democracy and Disagreement* argues that democratic societies ought to use public discussion to find consensus on divisive policy issues. Gutmann and Thompson argue that such discussion should be grounded in shared moral principles, chief among them reciprocity, accountability, and a commitment to openness. As "procedural" liberals, they believe that a neutral decision-making process will yield fair outcomes.

In many ways, the subject was a perfect one for Berkowitz. His forthcoming book offered a pointed critique of prevailing liberal thought, and he had published other reviews on similar topics. His reviews were already winning him a reputation as a rapier-pen. "One of Peter's best attributes is he writes these excellent review

The review he wrote, titled "The Debating Society," appeared in the November 25, 1996, issue of *The New Republic*. In civil language but with ferocious bite, Berkowitz tore into Thompson and Gutmann's book. Berkowitz argued, among other things, that the authors failed to understand that democracy and deliberation aren't always compatible. While supposed to serve the interests of the masses, the ostensibly neutral conditions that the authors establish for deliberative decision making can actually benefit the intellectual elites who determine those conditions:

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> Deliberative democracy as Gutmann and Thompson conceive it is, in effect, an aristocracy of intellectuals. In practice, power is likely to flow to the deans and the directors, the professors and pundits, and all those who, by virtue of advanced education, quickness of thought and fluency of speech, can persuade others of their prowess in the high deliberative arts.

Back at Harvard, the review drew notice among Berkowitz's colleagues. "Just as you come up for tenure, you criticize a senior colleague in print—that's pretty remarkable," says one senior government professor. "Several of us thought it admirable that he was clearly not intimidated," says another. Stanley Hoffmann, a distinguished scholar of international relations in the department, told Berkowitz ominously that the review was "brilliant but suicidal." It was likely that Thompson already opposed Berkowitz's tenure bid, Hoffmann and others suspected, but the review surely didn't help.

Even without the review, Berkowitz was no shoo-in. Harvard's government department includes only a handful of political theorists amid a vast number of political scientists—scholars of international relations, comparative politics, and American politics. Many of these scholars favor a quantitative analysis of the social sciences over the humanistic approach of political theory and can be indifferent or hostile to theorists, for whom the department typically allots only a few tenured slots.

To complicate matters, two theorists—Berkowitz and Honig—were up for tenure simultaneously. Most of Harvard's theorists are liberals, meaning (in the term's academic as distinct from its vernacular sense) that they focus on liberty, equality, and individual rights. Honig has been described as a leftist critic of liberalism. Berkowitz, while no right-winger, is a protégé of sorts of Harvard's conservative theorist Harvey Mansfield, and he often uses conservative ideas to interrogate mainstream liberalism. Thus, while department sources say the two candidacies were never linked, the problem of endorsing someone perceived to be on the right and not someone on the left, or vice versa, made it likely they'd rise or fall in tandem.

On a Monday night in early February 1997, the senior members of the government department gathered over dinner at the faculty club for a discussion and vote on Honig and Berkowitz. Turnout was high. Both candidates had already been endorsed by subcommittees mainly comprising other theorists. Now the department's tenured members could weigh in.

The debate at the meeting was long and thorough, stretching, as one professor put it, "past my bedtime." Conversation has been described as "intense." When the dust settled, both candidates had won the support of a sizable majority of their senior colleagues. According to one professor present, about two-thirds of the department voted for Berkowitz, and of that supermajority, roughly half was "enthusiastic," half "tepid."

After being approved by the dean's office, Berkowitz's candidacy headed to the ad hoc committee. The process for choosing the outside experts on this powerful committee has always been somewhat obscure. This past spring, prompted by the Berkowitz case, Associate Dean Carol Thompson (Dennis Thompson's wife) issued a memo stating that one of two associate deans handles the job. That dean considers names the department has suggested but also consults widely to find suitable experts. "The Dean [of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences] and the President," she stated in her memo, "do not take part in the committee selection process."

The morning of Thursday, April 17, the committee members—whose names were a tightly held secret—gathered in Massachusetts Hall, where Rudenstine keeps his office. The panelists had read Berkowitz's dossier, including a second batch of letters in which senior government professors laid out their views about Berkowitz. These letters can count more than how a professor votes in the departmental meeting, because one can elaborate on—or even qualify to the point of retracting—a vote of support. Some have suggested that these letters betrayed the mixed reviews underlying Berkowitz's numerically strong support.

The committee members heard witnesses from the department: first Shepsle, the department chair, then two advocates for Berkowitz (Mansfield and sinologist Roderick MacFarquhar) and one opponent. Each was grilled about Berkowitz's qualifications and whether he met the department's present needs. After a break, Rudenstine went around the table and asked each ad hoc committee member for an opinion. Four of the five advised that, contrary to the department's verdict, Berkowitz did not deserve tenure.

Rudenstine, of course, had the final say. At many universities today, the president simply rubber-stamps tenure decisions. But Harvard is one school where the president still takes an active role in the decision. "I spend a tremendous amount of time on the ad hoc cases," Rudenstine said in an interview. Roughly thirty times a year, he will devote a day to reviewing a candidate's dossier, another half day with the ad hoc committee, and additional time deliberating. "For me," Rudenstine says, "the only fundamental reason to be in a job like this is to be on the academic end of it as much as possible. I think that appointing tenured faculty and appointing deans are the two most important things I do." With Berkowitz, he chose to accept the ad hoc committee's recommendation and deny tenure; Bonnie Honig's ad hoc committee, which urged tenure, he chose to overrule.

On Sunday, April 20, at about 10 P.M., Berkowitz heard the news from Shepsle. It came as a blow but not an outrage; Berkowitz knew he faced opposition, and he recognized that Harvard's "world-class" standard rendered it pointless to argue. He hung up the phone, went for a walk, had a beer, and went to bed resolving to remain unperturbed. The next morning he got up early and defiantly set to work grading papers.

3

The news of the tenure denials, especially Honig's, caused a furor at Harvard. Fifteen female professors—including psychologist Carol Gilligan, law professor Martha Minow, literary critic Susan Suleiman, and historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich—signed a long letter lobbying for reconsideration in her case. By early May, *The Harvard Crimson* was running stories almost daily. Even *The New York Times* got into the act with an article, on May 18, 1997, describing "a firestorm of speculation and protest the likes of which has not been seen [at Harvard] in recent history."

Speculation abounded. Despite the extreme secrecy of the Harvard tenure process—or, more likely, because of it—

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all manner of stories and suggestions circulated through the academic grapevine. Word had leaked out that Honig's ad hoc committee had endorsed her, prompting uncomfortable questions about Rudenstine's veto. Many of these questions focused on Rudenstine's close friendship with Dennis Thompson, who was thought to have opposed Honig's candidacy as well as Berkowitz's. Johns Hopkins professor William E. Connolly, Honig's dissertation adviser, sent a letter to Thompson slyly accusing him of engaging in "back-channel communications" to sink Honig. According to another hypothetical scenario, it was Berkowitz's appointment that Thompson had really wanted to torpedo, and Honig had to go down because Rudenstine couldn't very well reject a conservative-leaning theorist and endorse a left-leaning one. Others wondered whether Thompson had used his administrative contacts to stack Berkowitz's ad hoc committee with people who, on the basis of their writings, could be safely expected to oppose someone of Berkowitz's politics.

The rumors, though purely speculative, spread, tarring Thompson's name around Harvard. To this day, some students and professors talk as if Thompson's guilt is a given, even though only the flimsiest evidence exists that he broke any rules.

Berkowitz figured he'd start looking for other work. But, he recalls, "several colleagues in the government department and some outside said the decision stinks. Some said it was a bad decision; some indicated that the process in my case was defective; a few suggested that the system encouraged deal making and back stabbing." As a critic of procedural liberalism, he wouldn't have been at all surprised if the proper procedures had been manipulated by those with the opportunity to do so; the line in his *New Republic* review about power flowing to "the deans and the directors"—clearly leveled at Gutmann, then a dean, and Thompson, a director—had essentially predicted his own fate. Nor did he believe that he certainly "deserved" tenure, that the outcome of the decision was necessarily wrong. But if Harvard's procedures had indeed been violated by behind-the-scenes dealings, he deserved another shot. As he later explained, "Let's say you have a horse race, and the gate doesn't open for the horse that's a 25-to-1 long shot. You still have to rerun the race."

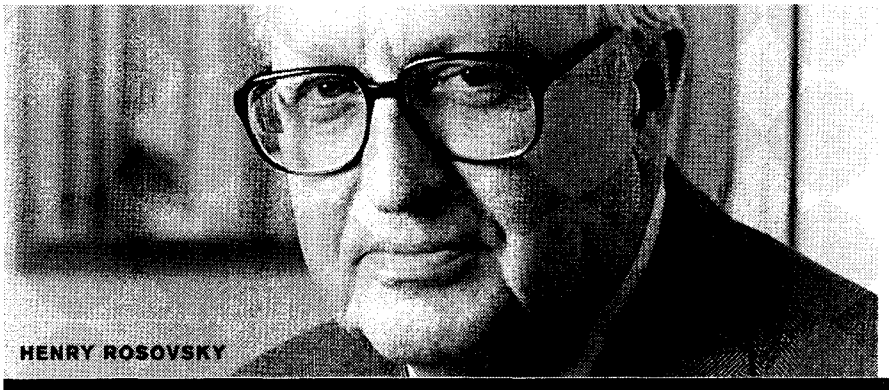
Hopes for a second chance are hardly unusual for those in Berkowtiz's circumstances. What was unusual in his case was that he stumbled upon the means to try to realize them. Later that spring Berkowitz attended a party at the home of his friend Martin Peretz, a Harvard lecturer and the owner of *The New Republic* (and in that capacity my former employer). Peretz counseled Berkowitz to consider legal action and offered to foot the bill. Over the next few months, Berkowitz thought about the idea. And while he took no action, he did let his suspicions be known, if obliquely. In September 1997, Berkowitz published another review in *The New Republic*, this one of a book titled *Hypocrisy and Integrity: Machiavelli, Rousseau, and the Ethics of Politics*. Certain passages were hard not to read in light of their author's recent experiences. "Liberal democracy," he wrote,

> has given rise...to the lectern liberal. He publicly preaches respect for the rule of law while behind the scenes he pursues personal advantage through the manipulation of the procedures that have been entrusted to his care. And there is the despotic democrat. She is all for empowering the people so long as she marches at the head of the movement and is generously rewarded for her public-spirited labors. But these and other familiar figures [do not] discredit liberal democracy....[they] do not mean that integrity is impossible. They mean that integrity is indispensable.

Around the time this review appeared, Berkowitz discussed his options over dinner with another friend, Larry Lessig, a former classmate and now a Harvard law professor. Lessig, who has won fame as an expert in the new field of cyberlaw, steered Berkowitz to the same person that Peretz had: Charles Nesson.

Berkowitz was tempted. Anyone who has read Jonathan Harr's 1995 nonfiction best-seller, *A Civil Action*, about a high-stakes lawsuit in Woburn, Massachusetts, will remember Nesson as "Billion-Dollar Charlie." In Harr's account, an idealistic young lawyer representing eight families who have lost children to leukemia sues the W.R. Grace and Beatrice companies for polluting Woburn's water supply with carcinogens. Desperate in the face of the corporations' unlimited wealth, the young lawyer enlists the brilliant and colorful Nesson. Nesson convinces the legal team to seek damages far greater than they'd previously considered. As Harr tells it, Nesson dangles the possibility of a big payout before the other attorneys. "What if you took away a full year of [the companies'] profits?"—a sum of a half-billion dollars—he asks them. "I think that might get their attention." But as readers of *A Civil Action* also know, the gamble fails. The plaintiffs settle for a paltry $8 million, the young lawyer goes bankrupt, and Nesson returns to his tenured perch at Harvard Law School.

Now Nesson was being urged on Berkowitz, but, as he had all summer, the



HENRY ROSOVSKY

JANE REED/HARVARD UNIVERSITY

THE FORMER DEAN, HENRY ROSOVSKY, WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC. BUT HE DID GIVE BERKOWITZ SOME REASON FOR HOPE.

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younger professor hesitated. Then, on a late-September weekend, Peretz introduced them at a party he was hosting. After an exchange of e-mails, the two men scheduled a meeting for October 6, the date Berkowitz appeared in Nesson's office.

Though Nesson had long disliked the Harvard tenure system, he was not initially keen on taking Berkowitz's case. He had been devoting his time to Internet law and was up to his ears in organizing a major conference on the topic for the spring. A new crusade was the last thing he needed.

But he recalled an incident from his own past that helped change his mind. Back in 1988, the university had denied tenure to law professor Clare Dalton, a devotee of the radical and controversial field of Critical Legal Studies. Nesson had agitated for a reversal, criticizing a process that had placed in charge of Dalton's case the éminence grise Archibald Cox, who embodied the very sort of traditional jurisprudence that Critical Legal Studies sought to overthrow. In a friendly conversation, Cox had said to Nesson, "Appeal." But Nesson had assumed Cox was putting him on, and ever since then he had kicked himself for not doing more.

Now, Nesson realized, he had another chance to challenge a tenure system he believed was triply flawed (at least). Harvard's process was unduly secretive: letters, votes, even details about the process itself were kept confidential. It was archaic, out of step with an age in which all kinds of information was circulating on the Internet with new rapidity and ease. And it was autocratic, relying on the unreviewable fiat of a single man, the president, who was both executive and judge—thereby cowing the faculty into meek silence. Berkowitz and Honig may have been political opposites, but both were outsiders getting screwed by an unfair system. "The essence of it was a conviction on hearing Peter describe the process that he went through, together with what I knew about the process from before, that it was deeply unfair. I responded more emotionally than legally in the first instance. I knew I wanted to help."

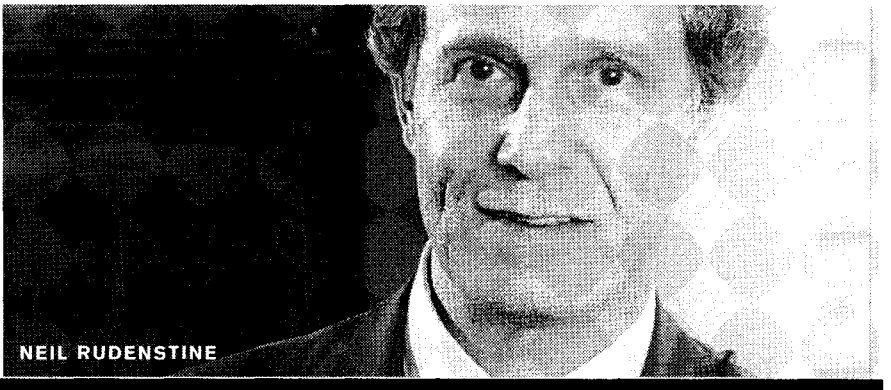
Nesson was as clueless as Berkowitz about how to appeal the decision. For advice, he steered Berkowitz to a longtime Harvard veteran deeply familiar with the university's byways. Berkowitz and Nesson decline to identify the man, but *Lingua Franca* has learned that it was former arts and sciences dean Henry Rosovsky.

Rosovsky, now a member of the Harvard Corporation, the university's top governing body, had literally written the book on Harvard's tenure process; his 1990 primer, *The University: An Owner's Manual*, explains the process at some length, if not exhaustively. On October 22, Berkowitz visited with Rosovsky from 2 in the afternoon until about 3:15. He found him engagingly gruff.

Rosovsky, while not optimistic, gave Berkowitz some reason for hope. There exists, he told Berkowitz, an obscure body called the Joint Committee on Appointments that, at least technically, holds ultimate power over tenure cases. As Jerry Green, Harvard's former provost, describes it, the committee gives final approval to all promotions, appointments, and changes in title. "It's the final blessing," Green says. It meets periodically to sign off on all appointments and to relay to the Corporation and the Board of Overseers, Harvard's second governing body, what's been going on. "We might ask questions about unusual cases," he says, but generally the work is pretty routine.

The news about the joint committee provided an opening. Attorney Matthew Feinberg, Nesson's friend and the lawyer whom Berkowitz had retained, wrote the committee a letter, charging that in Berkowitz's case "the procedures applied at the Ad Hoc and Presidential Review violated fundamental due process." Berkowitz had heard rumors that the members of his ad hoc committee had been named with little regard to the government department's recommendations. The letter suggested that, by ignoring those recommendations, the administration had, without justification, violated the normal process. While not fingering Thompson directly, Feinberg implied that someone with an interest in torpedoing Berkowitz's candidacy might have exerted some influence on the composition of the ad hoc committee. "Critical procedures designed to assure fairness were disregarded," he asserted.

On December 29, Anne Taylor, Harvard's general counsel, wrote back to Feinberg on the committee's behalf, saying that she had investigated the claims and found that "there is absolutely no evidence of irregularity or unfairness." The appointments committee would take no action.



NEIL RUDENSTINE

HARVARD PRESIDENT NEIL RUDENSTINE SAYS THAT MAKING TENURE DECISIONS "IS THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL THING I DO."

4

They had hit a brick wall. "They told us to go stuff it," Nesson told Berkowitz in a New Year's Day conversation. But he had a backup plan.

Every year Nesson taught a class on evidence during the law school's minisemester in January. It was a class for which he was

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famous on campus; among other things, he would have his students watch scenes from the courtroom movie *My Cousin Vinny* and write about them. Why not use the evidence class to air and discuss the legal issues surrounding Berkowitz's situation and Harvard's tenure process? With a team of bright, energetic Harvard law students on the case, who knew what might develop? All the evidence his class collected, he proposed, could be posted on the World Wide Web, a medium of openness and an antidote to Harvard's closed-door policies. "The Internet seems to express perfectly what we stand for," Nesson said. It could deliver Berkowitz's story to a wider, potentially sympathetic audience.

Berkowitz wondered if Nesson's strategy was in his best interest. It was one thing to petition the university through formal channels; it was another to turn his case into a spectacle, even a circus, that would surely rile the powers that be. He consulted with Feinberg, who also had doubts. "You put yourself out in a public way and you become a lightning rod," Feinberg says. But there were advantages, he added: Nesson's students might unearth a "mother lode" of legal arguments or information—for free. And "it might shake up the university enough to engage in a dialogue. My judgment was, so long as Peter understood the potential pitfalls, I had no problem with it." On January 3, Berkowitz gave Nesson the green light. "With eyes wide open," Berkowitz says, "I accepted the costs of proceeding in so public and unconventional a fashion."

For the next three weeks, some 144 law students gathered in the Ames Courtroom of Austin Hall each weekday morning from nine to noon and batted around questions and answers. Berkowitz presented his version of events to the class. Teams of students built a Web site with links to law review articles[http://cyber.harvard.edu/eon/evidence/berkowitz.html]. One group staged and videotaped a performance of hypothetical scenarios, with students acting the parts of Rudenstine and Thompson.

The case also drew the attention of more traditional media. Nesson's classroom antics garnered an item in *The New Yorker* and mentions in newspapers. Nesson wrote an Op-Ed piece for the *Crimson* charging, "Our present system breeds hypocrisy and distrust, infantilizes senior faculty and allows division to fester as factions fight for favor with the father." Elsewhere, he labeled the system a "monarchy" in which a single person advised by a "star chamber" wielded absolute and unreviewable power—and noted that that monarch was almost always ill-trained to judge the candidate's scholarship. Or, as he put it in an interview, "Neil Rudenstine doesn't know shit about Nietzsche."

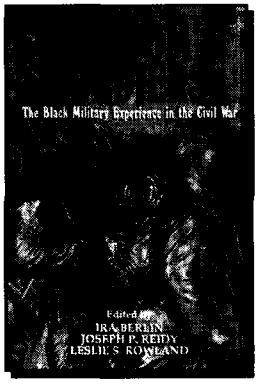
Still, Berkowitz and his advisers faced a challenge. It was hardly clear what kind of evidence even existed. If someone had sabotaged Berkowitz's candidacy, he or she might well have done it with a wink or a shake of the head, and not with a memo. The team did not presume it could uncover proof that misconduct had occurred. Rather, it hoped to create enough suspicion that Harvard's normal procedures had not been followed to compel a review.

They realized they needed, in Nesson's words, "investigative help of a high order." So they made another unconventional move. Nesson turned to an old

Freedom's Soldiers

The Black Military Experience in the Civil War

Ira Berlin,
Joseph P. Reidy, *and*
Leslie S. Rowland, *Editors*



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friend and one of the nation's leading sleuths, a private investigator named Terry Lenzner. A graduate of Harvard and Harvard Law School, and a former member of Harvard's Board of Overseers, the fifty-eight-year-old Lenzner is a storied figure in Washington, D.C. Having made his name working for the Justice Department's civil rights division in the 1960s and the Senate Watergate committee in the 1970s, he founded his own investigative firm in 1984. Tenure cases were hardly his specialty. His high-profile clients have included Mike Tyson, Brown & Williamson Tobacco—for whom he tried to dig up dirt on whistle-blower Jeffrey Wigand's personal life—and, most recently, President Clinton, who hired Lenzner to get the goods on Paula Jones and her financial backers.

Lenzner's first step was to ferret out who'd been on Berkowitz's ad hoc committee. Berkowitz had heard the committee was a "hanging court" from someone who had been there, but he still didn't know the identities of all its members.

Lenzner dug around and found that the panel included only one person—Leon Kass of the University of Chicago's Committee on Social Thought—whom the department had proposed. The others, according to Lenzner's findings, made an unusual lot: Jerome Bruner, a child psychologist at NYU; Ellen Kennedy, a political scientist at Penn; Isaac Kramnick, a liberal political theorist at Cornell; and Maria Tatar, a professor of German at Harvard. Mischievously, Nesson posted the names on his Web site, now titled "The Berkowitz Tenure Review."

Even those not involved with Berkowitz's case conceded that, as one senior government department professor put it, "It does seem like a very strange committee." First, none was expert on Nietzsche, the subject of Berkowitz's first book. Second, there was only one Harvard professor, not two—a break with normal procedure.

In addition, Berkowitz felt, many of the names seemed to be either potentially biased against him or unqualified to judge his work. He came up with dark scenarios to explain the appointments. Isaac Kramnick might have been a sound choice, but Berkowitz discovered that Kramnick had blurbed the book of a liberal philosopher whose work Berkowitz had attacked; might an administrator have chosen Kramnick expecting him to oppose Berkowitz's appointment? Berkowitz also knew that Harvard's Maria Tatar had, that same spring, strongly supported for tenure a German department colleague of hers who wrote on Nietzsche. Didn't that make her biased as well, since Berkowitz's appointment would threaten that of her colleague? The choice of the remaining members seemed, if not sinister, at least odd. Ellen Kennedy is not primarily known as a theorist. And the presence on the committee of eighty-three-year-old Jerome Bruner, who works in a field totally unrelated to Berkowitz's, seemed to confirm that something was awry.

There was one problem with all of this. Though Harvard has not divulged this information to Berkowitz or to the public, *Lingua Franca* has independently learned that, contrary to Lenzner's findings, Jerome Bruner was not on Berkowitz's tenure committee. The fifth panelist was actually another Jerome: Jerome Kagan, a renowned Harvard professor who is also a child psychologist. It still is odd that a child psychologist would be enlisted to judge a scholar of Nietzsche and liberalism, but Harvard frequently includes eminent professors from far-flung fields on the grounds that they understand the needs of the university. Lenzner's error gave Harvard administrators grounds for privately dismissing Berkowitz's team as a bunch of Keystone Kops. (Responding to reports of such mockery, Berkowitz's team says that Harvard can't legitimately withhold facts from them while also using their ignorance against them.)

Nesson, Feinberg, and Berkowitz wrote to the appointments committee on May 26, questioning the ad hoc committee's composition and asking why such leading political theorists as Michael Walzer, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, and a dozen and a half other obvious choices hadn't been asked to serve. They quoted Rosovsky's *University: An Owner's Manual* as stating that Harvard seeks "the most neutral advice possible, unaffected by local friendships or prejudices" and that "no effort or expense is spared in luring the right arbiters to Cambridge." (They didn't quote a later sentence: "Still, when—as sometimes happens—the outcome displeases a department, blame will all too often be attributed to unrepresentative or allegedly incompetent committee composition.")

They also revived questions about Dennis Thompson's behavior. Thompson

DANA SMITH

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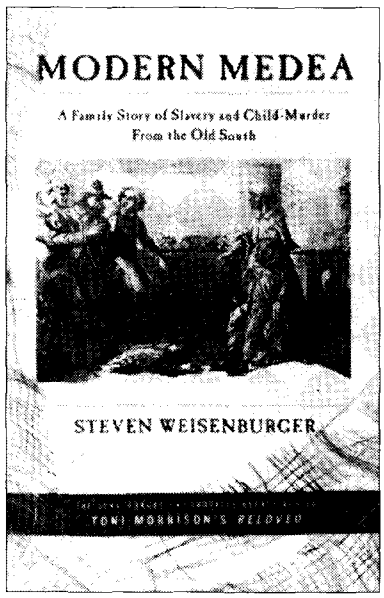

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had told the *Crimson* that he played only his "usual role" in the Berkowitz decision, meaning he voted and wrote a letter for Berkowitz's dossier. "Other than writing the customary letter to the dean," Thompson said in a later interview, "I took no part in the process outside the department." By this he clearly means that he didn't have any ex parte conversations with Rudenstine or the associate dean who assembled the ad hoc committee.

But Berkowitz's May 26 letter to the appointments committee suggested that Thompson may have acted inappropriately even before the assembly of the ad hoc committee began. Referring to the government department's initial consideration of Berkowitz's case, the letter charged that it was "precisely by playing his 'usual role' in his own department's tenure deliberations after having become associate provost that Professor Thompson impaired the integrity of the procedure." In other words, given his administrative position and close relationship with Rudenstine, it was a conflict of interest for him to participate in his department's evaluation of Berkowitz. Thompson, in the view of Berkowitz, Nesson, and Feinberg, should have recused himself—if only to maintain appearances. "I don't think Dennis acted self-consciously malevolently," Nesson says. "I do think Dennis abused his power, his close relationship with Neil Rudenstine, by the aggressiveness and vehemence with which he expressed his opinion all over the place. I think he acted unethically....The limits on Harvard are not just the technical legal limits of the law. You've got to have an ethical center."

There is some precedent for senior administrators recusing themselves from tenure cases involving their own departments. "When I was provost," says economics professor Jerry Green, "I sat on every ad hoc committee—except in the economics department. In those, I absented myself." Unlike the provost, though, the associate provost has no role in tenure decisions once they're past the departmental stage. Thus, Thompson maintains, there was no reason for him to abstain from his usual departmental role. "Faculty members who are part-time administrators—including [associate dean and government professor] Susan Pharr [and others]—have always continued to take part in departmental meetings," he says.

Senior Harvard administrators refuse to comment on the record, citing the confidentiality of the process. But in private they, too, strenuously deny the allegations. "These are outrageous and absolutely monstrous suggestions," says one high-level official. "It is calumny. I mean, how could you disprove it?" And for all their digging, Nesson and Berkowitz have unearthed no hard proof of wrongdoing on Thompson's part, only an appearance of impropriety—and a contestable one at that.

Harvard officials also defend the secrecy of the tenure process in strong terms. Anne Taylor says that while "Dennis has taken a terrible rap here, he'll suck it up, and Neil will suck it up, because the larger principle is very important." That principle, the confidentiality of the tenure process, "provides people an opportunity to speak candidly. We are making lifetime appointments and want to know, Is this person the best? People are a lot less likely to speak honestly if they know their words are going to be bandied about."

But even the most justified uses of secrecy come with costs as well as benefits. Nesson points out that confidentiality can shield wrongdoing. "It offers avenues for all sorts of strands [unrelated to] the merits of a case to come into play," he says. "Real people, real lives get chewed up."

Among those lives is not just Berkowitz's but Thompson's. The extreme confidentiality of the process has created for him a double bind. On the one hand, it has allowed incomplete or even incorrect information to seep out (since maintaining absolute secrecy is always impossible), damaging his name; on the other hand, it has prevented him from repairing his reputation. Could a greater dose of the very accountability and publicity he espouses in *Democracy and Disagreement* help him do so?

Thompson rejects any suggestion of a disjunction between his actions and his scholarship. He points out that nothing in his book "is inconsistent with maintaining confidentiality in university decisions." Harvard is a private institution; a university is not a state; and tenure is not democratic. Still, in a chapter called "The Value of Publicity," he and Gutmann argue that any attempt to impose secrecy on a public policy or procedure should be made by means of public deliberation and should serve a clear public end. At the very least, Harvard might do well to ask whether the

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NESSON POINTS OUT THAT CONFIDENTIALITY CAN SHIELD WRONGDOING. "REAL PEOPLE, REAL LIVES GET CHEWED UP." BUT HAS HE FOUND ANY EVIDENCE OF MISCONDUCT?

intense secrecy of its tenure procedures is justified according to the modest standards that Thompson and Gutmann suggest.

5

If Berkowitz and Nesson have raised worthy questions about the general issues of secrecy and sunlight, what good they've done for Berkowitz in particular is less clear. Berkowitz has been granted a one-year renewal of his contract and will teach at Harvard this coming year. Beyond that, he doesn't know.

Many colleagues who had been sympathetic to Berkowitz's plight have concluded that, starting with the highly public shenanigans of this past winter—the evidence class, the investigator, the Internet—he's gone too far. "What's he doing?" asks one. "Charlie Nesson's a good guy, but he's a little nutty. Everyone feels bad Peter didn't get tenure. But it's over." Some suggest that Nesson has used Berkowitz as a pawn for his own purposes—exploring Internet law, reforming tenure—and hasn't paid enough attention to the risks for Berkowitz. They say Berkowitz should close up shop on his unattainable pursuit and get back to his high-level scholarship before he damages his good name throughout academia.

When asked whether the evidence class and Internet gambits were in Berkowitz's best interests, Nesson said, "I'm not his lawyer. I'm his legal adviser. Matt's job is the lawyer's job of representing his client with no other interests." At the same time, he emphasizes his loyalty to Berkowitz: "I keep getting messages saying that if I would sell Peter down the river Harvard would consider broader tenure reform." Nesson claims he has refused because to reform tenure while forsaking Berkowitz would be like abolishing capital punishment after the petitioner is put to death.

Berkowitz also rejects the characterizations of himself as a helpless pawn. "I'm grateful to Charlie for his energy and his enthusiasm," he says. As for getting a bad reputation in academia, Berkowitz says he's been aware since the beginning that it's a risk, but one he has chosen to assume.

If Harvard won't consider an appeal, Berkowitz and his lawyers say they'll take further action. One possibility is to sue and compel Harvard to reveal secret information in court, though they say this will be a last resort. "The court system is already overburdened," Nesson says. "This should be handled within Harvard if Harvard can possibly muster the strength of character to do it." They may assemble a slate of candidates to run for positions on the Board of Overseers on a plank of tenure reform—trying to change Harvard's character themselves.

In the meantime, the case remains open. Has Berkowitz really been denied a fair shot at tenure? Has Harvard's tenure system (and others like it) really created such nefarious figures as Dennis Thompson, the lectern liberal, and Neil Rudenstine, the despotic democrat? Or has it simply allowed these fictions to flourish in the mind of a thoughtful scholar who has been led on a quixotic quest? Not even the combined, and considerable, efforts of the philosopher, the law professor, and the private eye have succeeded in revealing the answers.

David Greenberg, former acting editor of *The New Republic,* is a Richard Hofstadter Fellow in American history at Columbia University. He also writes a column for *Slate*.

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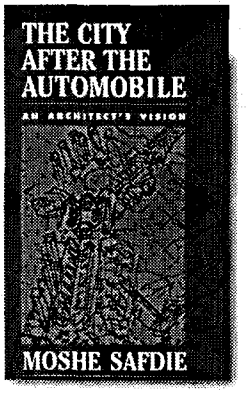

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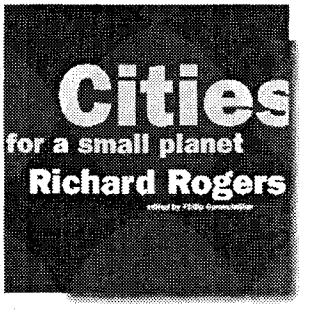

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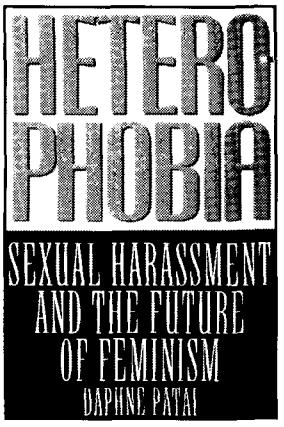

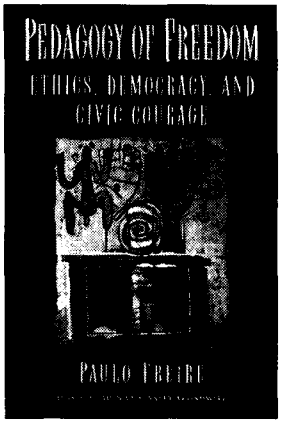

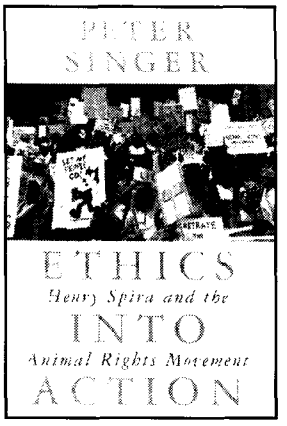

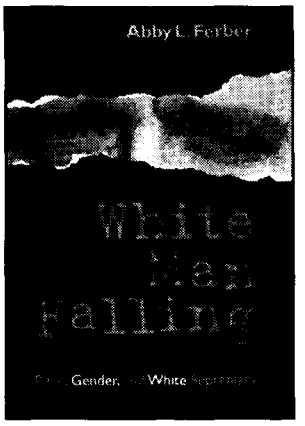

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ENJOY YOUR ZIZEK

AN EXCITABLE SLOVENIAN PHILOSOPHER EXAMINES THE OBSCENE PRACTICES OF EVERYDAY LIFE—INCLUDING HIS OWN.

BY **ROBERT S. BOYNTON**

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AMID THE BUSTLE OF TONY BLAIR'S Britain, the tradition of the afternoon tea is one of the last remaining traces of the country's genteel past. There are few places that conjure up that past better than the oak-paneled King's Bar Lounge at the Hotel Russell, a fading Victorian pile that sits on the edge of Bloomsbury, only a few short blocks from the British Museum. On a drizzly summer afternoon, I sink into one of the Lounge's overstuffed leather chairs, feeling as if I were being transported back to an earlier, more leisurely era—far from "cool Britannia" and debates over the future of the euro. The spell is abruptly broken, however, by the sudden, agitated entrance of the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek, who is in town to deliver a series of lectures at the British Film Institute.

"We must have the most fanatically precise English tea," Zizek insists, gesticulating dramatically in the style of a European dictator. "Everything must be exactly the way the English do it: clotted cream, cucumber sandwiches, scones. It must be the most radically English experience possible!"

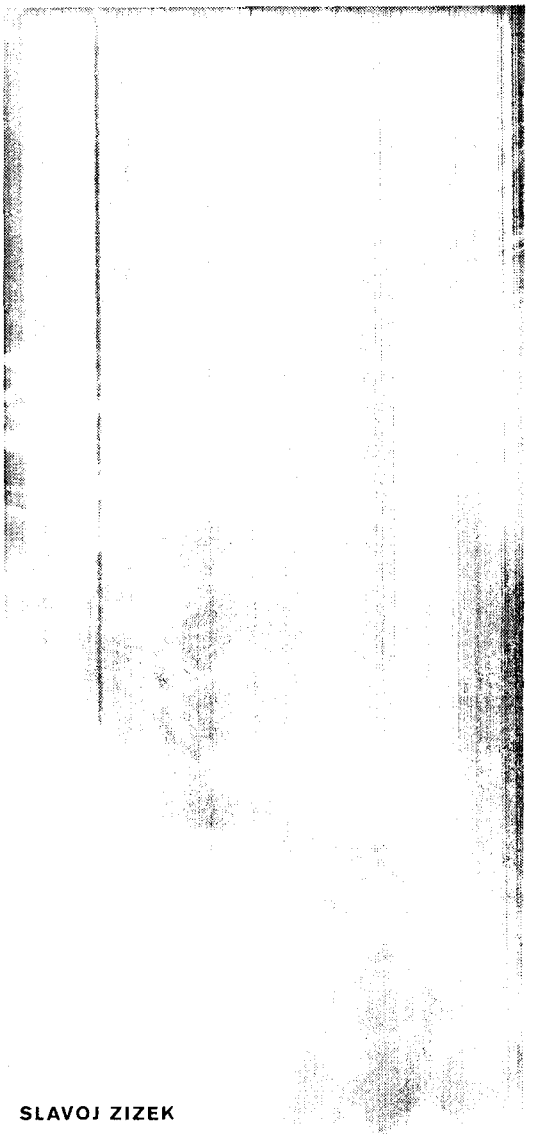
Bearded, disheveled, and loud, Zizek looks like central casting's pick for the role of Eastern European Intellectual. Newspapers are lowered and conversations stop as a skittish waiter shows us to a small table in the far corner of the room. Barely pausing to sit down, Zizek launches into a monologue so learned and amusing that it could very well appear—verbatim—in one of the many books he has written about the obscene rules that sustain our supposedly civilized social practices. With lightning speed, he moves from the decline of British culture ("They took perfectly good tea, added milk, and made it look like filthy dishwater!") to Hollywood ("Brad Pitt's *Seven Years in Tibet*—a terrible movie!") to the Tibetan legal system ("a process of formalized bribery where opposing parties bid against each other in a ritualized auction—I absolutely love this!").

Zizek talks exactly as he writes, in a nonstop pastiche of Hegelian philosophy, Marxist dialectics, and Lacanian jargon leavened with references to film noir, dirty jokes, and pop culture ephemera. "Discussing Hegel and Lacan is like breathing for Slavoj. I've seen him talk about theory for four hours straight without flagging," says UC-Berkeley's Judith Butler. When not mediated by the printed page, however, the obsessive-compulsive quality that makes his hyperkinetic prose so exhilarating is somewhat overwhelming—even, evidently, for Zizek himself. Popping the occasional Xanax to settle his nerves, he tells me about his heart problems and frequent panic attacks. As his eyes dart around the room and his manic monologue becomes more frantic, I fear that I may be his last interviewer. Zizek is like a performance artist who is terrified of abandoning the stage; once he starts talking, he seems unable to stop. "You must be much crueler, more brutal with me!" he pleads, even as he speeds his pace to prevent me from cutting him off. "You should never enter a sadomasochistic relationship," he scolds, a sly smile peeking out from his bushy beard. "You wouldn't whip your partner hard enough!"

When the waiter returns, Zizek finally pauses, studies the menu, and orders a pot of mint tea and a plate of sugar cookies. Mint tea and cookies? What about our "radical" English experience? "Oh, I can't drink anything stronger than herbal tea in the afternoon," he says meekly. "Caffeine makes me too nervous."

FOR Zizek, a conversation—whatever the topic—is an exercise in self-contradiction. When he thinks you are beginning to get a handle on his motives or desires, he pulls an about-face, insists he doesn't mean anything he has just said, that his own views are the exact opposite. His contrariness is famous, and as a writer it has generally served him well—helping to earn him a reputation as a dazzlingly acute thinker and prose stylist and to win him a cult following among American graduate students. In person, however, it seems that Zizek's contrariness is at least partly an uncontrollable compulsion. And yet his manipulations and subterfuges are so entertaining, and his intellect so stimulating, that it is far wiser to surrender without a fight than to try to trump him at his game.

Later that evening, I have an opportunity to watch Zizek's mesmerizing oratorical skills in action at the Museum of the Moving Image, where he gives a standing-room-only lecture on the erotic forces at play in science fiction. The audience is a diverse group, with hip, nose-ring-studded film theorists jostling for seats with graying, tweedy academics. Beforehand, I find Zizek pacing madly



SLAVOJ ZIZEK

outside the auditorium, and he confides to me that this week's panic attacks have been so severe he nearly canceled tonight's engagement. A few minutes into his talk, however, he is fine; his emotional anxiety is quickly transformed into a blur of theoretical intensity.

By the time his two-week-long lecture series is completed, he has offered a succession of Lacanian interpretations—accompanied by visuals—of *Titanic*, *Deep Impact*, *The Abyss*, several works by Hitchcock and David Lynch, and even an episode of *Oprah* (with Slovene subtitles). At one point, he gleefully fast-forwards over a portion of Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, explaining that despite its theoretical value it is quite a dull film. "For me, life exists only insofar as I can theorize it," he confesses. "I can be bored to death by a movie, but if you give me a good theory, I will gladly erase the past in an Orwellian fashion and claim that I have always enjoyed it!" It is a bravura performance, replete with Zizek's trademark synthesis of philosophical verve and

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Zizek militates against the "distorted picture of Lacan as belonging to the field of 'post-structuralism.'" Rather, he argues that Lacan offers "perhaps the most radical contemporary version of the Enlightenment."

Zizek's Lacanian defense of the Enlightenment distinguishes him from many contemporary theorists. Indeed, the enormous popularity of Zizek's best-known book, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Verso, 1989), may owe something to the fact that it offers an alternative to two entrenched and antithetical bodies of contemporary thought: the French postmodernists' skepticism about the Enlightenment ideals of universality, truth, reason, and progress, and the German theorist Jürgen Habermas's attempt to vindicate those ideals with his theory of "communicative rationality." While Foucault and Derrida dissolve the human subject in a sea of discursive indeterminacy and historical contingency, Habermas's defense of reason ultimately rests on a vision of the individual as an ethical actor in a functional community.

Zizek is sympathetic to many of Habermas's aims, but he offers a more complex psychoanalytic account of human thinking and desiring. Unlike Habermas, he assumes that communi-

[illegible] CRIBES ZIZEK AS "THE MOST [illegible] T EXPONENT OF PSYCHOANALYSIS [illegible] EUROPE FOR SOME DECADES."

rhetorical playfulness—an intellectual style that recently led Terry Eagleton to describe him in *The London Review of Books* as "the most formidably brilliant exponent of psychoanalysis, indeed of cultural theory in general, to have emerged in Europe for some decades."

Of course, many readers are likely to feel disoriented by Zizek's fast-paced, densely associative writing, as well as by his reliance on the difficult notions of a notorious French psychoanalyst. Zizek's chief intellectual hero, Jacques Lacan, is a man whom recent critics have portrayed as an eccentric tyrant who may have perpetrated a grand intellectual hoax on his followers. But Zizek's appeal is due, in part, to his considerable ease with two subjects that most disciples of Lacan disregard: popular culture and politics. In much of his work, Zizek employs familiar concepts from the psychoanalytic and Lacanian lexicon—projection, inversion, the Real and the Symbolic—to explore the ideological contradictions of contemporary life. In books like *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, *Looking Awry*, *The Plague of Fantasies*, and *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)*, he offers provocative, and always lively, readings of everything from Patricia Highsmith novels to the resurgence of nationalism in Eastern Europe.

Politically savvy and deeply rational, Zizek's Lacan is a far cry from the abstruse guru of indeterminancy invoked by American literary theorists. In his writing, ties are constitutively dysfunctional and that the human subject is always divided against itself by contradictory desires and identifications. And the rationalist project must proceed from the recognition of these fundamental truths. The thrill of reading Zizek (who, as a stylist, no one would ever confuse with the turgid Habermas) arises in part from the collision between the insanity he finds everywhere in our psychic and social lives and the rigorous clarity with which he anatomizes its workings. "He has almost single-handedly revived a dynamically dialectical, Hegelian, style of thinking," says Eric Santner, a professor of Germanic studies at the University of Chicago. "I think of him as a sort of 'logician of culture' who reveals the underlying struc-

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tures of politics and ideology in much the way Kant did."

If Zizek's is not a household name in academe, this is not due to a lack of effort on his part. His ability to compose his books in English (parts of them are subsequently translated into Slovene) has so hastened his pace of publication that his various English-language publishers must occasionally scramble to keep him from flooding the market. No less than a dozen titles have appeared under his name since 1989, including several essay collections in the separate book series he edits for Verso and for Duke University Press. And 1999 will be a big year—even for Zizek Inc. Blackwell is publishing *The Zizek Reader*, and Verso is publishing *The Ticklish Subject*. Advertised as his magnum opus, *The Ticklish Subject* may be his most focused and most political book to date. Taking on contemporary intellectual bugaboos—from political correctness to multiculturalism—Zizek argues for a radical politics that will be unafraid to make sweeping claims in the name of a universal human subject. "A spectre is haunting Western academia," he writes, "the spectre of the Cartesian subject."

MANY of Zizek's distinguishing marks—his passion for psychoanalytic inversions, his fascination with Western popular culture, his resistance to the cynical logic of depoliticization—can be traced to the paradoxes of growing up under Yugloslav socialism. Born in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 1949, Zizek was the son of devout communists who grew increasingly disenchanted. He had a difficult relationship with his father, who wanted him to become an economist. Instead, Zizek divided his attention between reading philosophy and watching movies. Access to Western movies was easy because of a tradition requiring that movie companies deposit a copy of each film they distributed with the archives of regional universities. "The cinematheque theater was a miracle for us," remembers Zizek. "We were able to see unlimited Hollywood movies and European art films—one or two a day, five days a week."

Despite its relatively liberal cultural and political policies, Zizek argues, Tito's Yugoslavia produced a more repressive (though subtly so) brand of ideology than the other Eastern-bloc countries. While Czechoslovakian or Polish authorities made no secret of their authoritarian tactics, the more permissive Yugoslavian communists sent out mixed signals about what was and was not permitted, thereby fostering an unusually effective, because at least partially self-regulating, system of censorship. By way of example, Zizek tells the story of a Slovenian book publisher in the fairly tolerant late 1970s who wanted to collect some of the best-known Soviet dissident writing. "The party line fluctuated so much that the Central Committee of the League of Slovene Communists was terrified of committing itself one way or the other," Zizek explains. "So the members said, 'Wait a minute, you are yourself free to decide what to publish'—which was the really Kafkaesque situation. At least with Polish censorship, it was a strict bureaucracy, which would negotiate, reach a compromise, and give you a final decision. This would have been paradise for us! The nightmare of Yugoslavia was that you couldn't get a clear answer from anyone about anything."

JACQUES LACAN

The young Zizek was attracted to ideas that were relatively uncontaminated by ruling ideologies. After completing his undergraduate studies in 1971, Zizek wrote a four-hundred-page master's thesis called "The Theoretical and Practical Relevance of French Structuralism," which canvassed the work of Lacan, Derrida, Kristeva, Lévi-Strauss and Deleuze. Initially, Zizek was promised a university position. But when the evaluating committee judged his thesis insufficiently Marxist, the job went to another, less qualified candidate. "Slavoj was so charismatic and brilliant they were afraid to allow him to teach at the university lest he become the reigning sovereign at the department of philosophy and influence students," says the Lacanian social philosopher Mladen Dolar, who was also a graduate student at the time.

Zizek was devastated by this slight and spent the next several years virtually unemployed, supporting himself by translating philosophy from the German and living off his parents. In 1977, some of his former professors used their connections to win him a job at the Central Committee of the League of Slovene Communists, where, apart from assisting with occasional speeches (in which he would insert covertly subversive comments), Zizek was left alone to do his own philosophical work: The philosopher whose unreliable politics prevented him from teaching was now helping to write propaganda for the leaders of Slovenia's Communist Party. Zizek still revels in the irony. "I would write philosophy papers and then deliver them at international conferences in Italy and France—trips that were paid for by the Central Committee!"

If Yugoslavian socialism produced a thoroughly cynical citizenry, a country of people who understood that the last thing the regime desired was for them to believe too ardently in the official principles of communism, this, argues Zizek, was ideology at its most effective. "The paradox of the regime was that if people were to take their ideology seriously it would effectively destroy the system," he says. In his account, cynicism and apathy are explanations not for the regime's failure but, perversely, for its success. "The conventional wisdom is that socialism was a failure because, instead of creating a 'New Man,' it produced a country of cynics who believed that the

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ZIZEK'S HERO, JACQUES LACAN, IS A MAN WHOM RECENT CRITICS HAVE PORTRAYED AS AN ECCENTRIC TYRANT WHO MAY HAVE PERPETRATED A GRAND INTELLECTUAL HOAX.

system is corrupt, politics is a horror, and that only private happiness is possible," he argues. "But my point is this: Perhaps depoliticization was the true aim of socialist education? This was surely the daily experience of my youth."

To counter this depoliticization, Zizek banded together with the Ljubljana Lacanians, a tightknit group of Slovenian scholars that included Mladen Dolar, Alenka Zupancic, Miran Bozovic, Zdravko Kobe, and Zizek's wife, Renata Salecl. In their hands, French psychoanalysis acquired an often highly comic cast. The group took over a journal, *Problemi*, and founded a book publishing series, Analecta; inspired by Lacan's roots in the French surrealist movement (he was friends with André Breton and Salvador Dalí), they used these outlets to perpetrate several literary hoaxes. Articles in *Problemi* were frequently written under pseudonyms or left unsigned, in parodic imitation of Stalinist practice. Zizek once wrote a pseudonymous review attacking one of his own books on Lacan. On another occasion, *Problemi* published a fictional roundtable discussion of feminism in which Zizek played the boorish interlocutor, posing provocative questions to nonexistent participants. (Later, in *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, Zizek continued to engage in literary hoaxes with an essay on the films of Roberto Rossellini—none of which he had seen.) With the regime's aversion to Lacan on the rise, Zizek sensed a wonderful opportunity for mischief; writing in a widely read academic journal, *Anthropos*, under an assumed name, he published a deliberately clumsy attack on an imaginary book that allegedly detailed why Lacan's theories were wrong. The next day bookstores across Ljubljana received requests for the title.

In 1981, Zizek spent a year in Paris, where he met some of the thinkers whose work he had been so avidly consuming. He would return often. In 1982, however, Lacan died and his mantle passed to his son-in-law, Jacques-Alain Miller—a man who would play an important role in Zizek's career. A former student of Althusser's, Miller had impressed Lacan with the coherence he brought to the master's sprawling theoretical system. While many Lacanians accuse Miller of simplifying Lacan (perish the thought!), others believe that Lacan's posthumous reputation would not have grown without Miller's ordering influence. A shrewd political operator, Miller was eager to expand the Lacanian empire farther than its prog-

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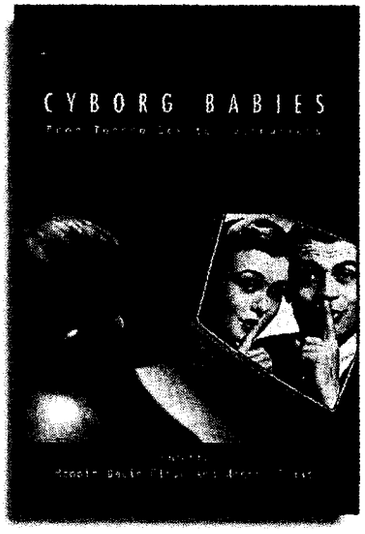

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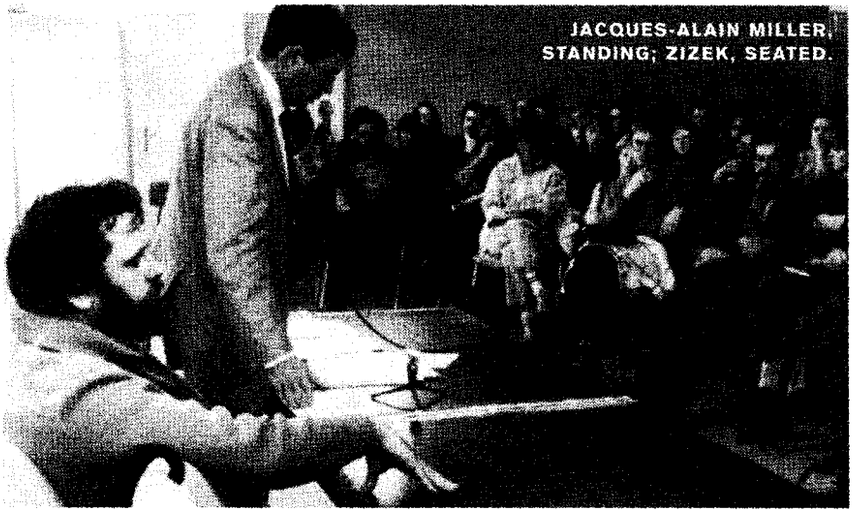
JACQUES-ALAIN MILLER, STANDING; ZIZEK, SEATED.

"IT WAS MY STRICT RULE TO LIE CONSISTENTLY: TO INVENT ALL SYMPTOMS, FABRICATE ALL DREAMS," SAYS ZIZEK OF HIS ANALYSIS WITH MILLER.

enitor had ever imagined. Miller taught two classes in Paris: one that was open to anyone, and an exclusive, thirty-student seminar at the École de la Cause Freudienne in which he examined the works of Lacan page by page. After a brief interview, Zizek and Dolar were invited to attend this latter class. "Miller took enormous interest in us because we came from Yugoslavia," Dolar remembers. "We had been publishing Lacan in *Problemi* and Analecta for years, and he was grateful for that. He thinks very strategically and didn't have anyone else established in Eastern Europe. To him, we were the last stronghold of Western culture on the eastern front."

Zizek's Paris years, although intellectually stimulating, were not very happy. Thanks to Miller, who got him a coveted teaching fellowship, he was able to stay in Paris and write a second dissertation, a Lacanian reading of Hegel, Marx, and Saul Kripke, portions of which would later become *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. But his first marriage, to a fellow Slovenian philosophy graduate student, had just ended, and there were times he felt he was on the brink of committing suicide. His meager stipend barely kept him alive. He was a ripe if reluctant candidate for psychoanalysis, and there were many days, he says, when he skipped meals in order to pay for treatment.

In addition to being Zizek's teacher, adviser, and sponsor, Jacques-Alain Miller became his analyst as well. While familiarity between analyst and analysand is discouraged by Freudians, it was not unusual for Lacanians to socialize with their patients. Lacan's most controversial psychoanalytic innovation, however, was the variable, or "short," session through which he tried to combat a patient's resistance by introducing an element of discontinuity into the therapeutic process. In contrast to Freud's fifty-minute "hour," Lacan's sessions ended the moment he sensed the patient had uttered an important word or phrase—a break that might occur in fifteen minutes or less. Miller had fine-tuned the logic of therapy to the point that few sessions lasted more than ten minutes. "To be in analysis with Miller was to step into a divine, predestined universe," says Zizek. "He was a totally arbitrary despot. He would say, come back tomorrow at exactly 4:55, but this didn't mean anything! I would arrive at 4:55 and would find a dozen people waiting."

One goal of the variable session is to keep a patient from preparing material ahead of time. In this respect, Lacanian psy-

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choanalysis met its match in Zizek. "It was my strict rule, my sole ethical principle, to lie consistently: to invent all symptoms, fabricate all dreams," he reports of his treatment. "It was obsessional neurosis in its absolute purest form. Because you never knew how long it would last, I was always prepared for at least two sessions. I have this incredible fear of what I might discover if I really went into analysis. What if I lost my frenetic theoretical desire? What if I turned into a common person?" Eventually, Zizek claims, he had Miller completely taken in by his charade: "Once I knew what aroused his interest, I invented even more complicated scenarios and dreams. One involved the Bette Davis movie *All About Eve*. Miller's daughter is named Eve, so I told him that I had dreamed about going to a movie with Bette Davis in it. I planned every detail so that when I finished he announced grandly, 'This was your revenge against me!'"

As the head of the main Lacanian publishing house, Miller was in a position to turn Zizek's doctoral dissertation into a book. So, when not presenting his fabricated dreams and fantasies, Zizek would transform his sessions into de facto academic seminars to impress Miller with his keen intellect. Although Zizek successfully defended his dissertation in front of Miller, he learned after the defense that Miller did not intend to publish his thesis in book form. The following night he had his first panic attack, which had all the symptoms of a heart attack. Eventually, he placed the manuscript with the publishing house of a rival Lacanian faction.

Before Zizek began shuttling between Paris and Ljubljana, his professional prospects had already taken a turn for the better. He was still unable to hold a university position, but in 1979 some friends intervened and got him a job as a researcher at the Institute for Sociology. Given its social science orientation, Zizek was not allowed to do philosophy; instead, he announced that he would do research on the formation of Slovenian national identity. "I did the transcendental trick and said that although the long-term project is on Slovene nationalism, I must first sketch the conceptual structure of nationalism," he says. "Unfortunately, this 'clarification' has now gone on for two decades."

The job was a blessing in disguise. Once Zizek made his peace with the social scientists, he discovered that he was free to

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write, with none of the bureaucratic and pedagogical burdens of a Western academic. In essence, he is on permanent sabbatical. "Every three years I write a research proposal. Then I subdivide it into three one-sentence paragraphs, which I call my yearly projects. At the end of each year I change the research proposal's future-tense verbs into the past tense and then call it my final report," he explains. Because the institute's budget depends on how much its members publish, Zizek—who publishes more work in international publications than everyone else combined—is left completely alone. "With total freedom, I am a total workaholic," he says.

Total freedom also allowed Zizek to play a role in Slovenian politics. Although not a full-fledged activist, he was intimately involved in the movement that helped hasten the end of Yugoslavian socialism. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Zizek was a popular newspaper columnist for the weekly *Mladina* and helped found the Liberal Democratic Party, which opposes both communism and right-wing nationalism and has stressed feminist and environmental issues. In 1990, he even ran for a seat on the four-member collective Slovenian presidency (he finished fifth). As Slovenia achieved a mostly peaceful independence, Zizek wrote frequently about the bloody conflicts nearby. And when the Liberal Democrats came to power in 1992, he found himself in the odd position of being an intellectual who wasn't marginalized. Zizek is quite proud of the "dirty deals" and compromises made by his party. "I despise abstract leftists who don't want to touch power because it is corrupting," he says. "No, power is there to be grabbed. I don't have any problem with that."

THE DAY after Zizek's lecture, he and his wife, Renata Salecl, meet me for lunch at a cozy Greek café just down the block from their London hotel. An attractive woman with a round face and short blond hair, Salecl is as calm and deliberate as Zizek is nervous and neurotic. Zizek, who claims he lacks the social graces to attend cocktail parties or schmooze with scholars and politicians, says that he relies on her to navigate the shoals of the outside world. She buys his clothes ("For me, shopping is like masturbating in public," he says), negotiates their teaching deals, and generally keeps him from having a nervous breakdown. Her first book, *Discipline as a Condition of Freedom* (which was recently staged as a ballet), was a Foucault-inspired analysis of communist Yugoslavia. "Nobody believed in the rules, but they nevertheless kept following them obediently, and I wanted to know why," she explains. She has spent the morning at the offices of Verso, which will be publishing her book *[Per]versions of Love & Hate* this fall.

Together, she and Zizek have mastered the intricacies of American academic politics and established a congenial teaching ritual that keeps them in the United States for one semester every year. Recently, they have held positions at Columbia, Princeton, Tulane, University of Minnesota, Cardozo Law School, and the New School for Social Research; this fall, they are teaching at the University of Michigan. The duo has refined the process to a science. Each university must provide teaching positions, offices, and accommodations for both of them and agree that they will each teach

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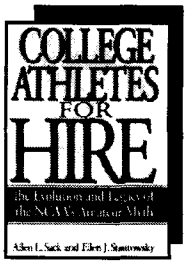

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"AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES HAVE THIS ECCENTRIC IDEA THAT YOU MUST WORK FOR YOUR SALARY," ZIZEK SAYS. "I PREFER TO DO THE OPPOSITE."

one two-month course, consisting of one lecture per week on whatever subject they happen to be writing about. In addition to his U.S. pay, Zizek receives a full salary from his institute in Ljubljana. "When people ask me why I don't teach permanently in the United States, I tell them that it is because American universities have this very strange, eccentric idea that you must work for your salary," Zizek says. "I prefer to do the opposite and not work for my salary!"

Zizek has developed an elaborate set of psychological tricks to manipulate his American students and enable him to have as little contact with them as possible. At the first meeting of each course, he announces that all students will get an A and should write a final paper only if they want to. "I terrorize them by creating a situation where they have no excuse for giving me a paper unless they think it is really good. This scares them so much, that out of forty students, I will get only a few papers," he says. "And I get away with this because they attribute it to my 'European eccentricity.'"

Zizek says that he deals with student inquiries in a similar spirit. "I understand I have to take questions during my lectures, since this is America and everybody is allowed to talk about everything. But when it comes to office hours, I have perfected a whole set of strategies for how to block this," he says with a smirk. "The real trick, however, is to minimize their access to me and simultaneously appear to be even more democratic!" Initially, Zizek scheduled office hours immediately before class so that students could not run on indefinitely. Then he came up with the idea of requiring them to submit a written question in advance, on the assumption that most would be too lazy to do it (they were). Zizek reserves what he calls "the nasty strategy" for large lecture classes in which the students often don't know one another. "I divide the time into six twenty-minute periods and then fill in the slots with invented names. That way the students think that all the hours are full and I can disappear," he explains.

UNDERGRADUATES are apt to be tolerant of their professors' idiosyncracies, but Zizek may have less luck hiding from critics when *The Ticklish Subject* is published this winter. Just as he once saw socialist Yugoslavia as a country that had been cynically depoliticized by its leaders, so Zizek now believes that conservatives, liberals, and radicals have effectively stamped out genuine pol-

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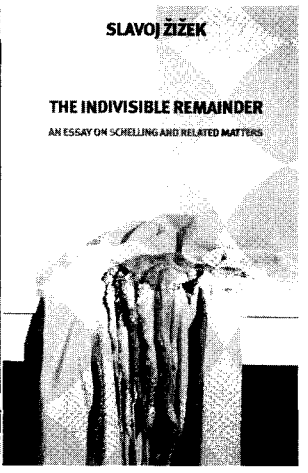
itics in the West. The modern era, he argues, is decidedly "post-political." Instead of politics, he writes, we have a largely conflict-free "collaboration of enlightened technocrats (economists, public opinion specialists...) and liberal multiculturalists" who negotiate a series of compromises that pose as—but fail to reflect—a "universal consensus."

Blair's New Labourites and Clinton's New Democrats are only the most recent depoliticized political parties to have made "the art of the possible" their modest mantra. Zizek also charges that sexual and ethnic identity politics "fits perfectly the depoliticized notion of society in which every particular group is 'accounted for,' has its specific status (of a victim) acknowledged through affirmative action or other measures destined to guarantee social justice." In satisfying grievances through programs targeted to specific groups, such as affirmative action, the tolerant liberal establishment prevents the emergence of a genuinely universal—and in Zizek's definition, properly political—impulse.



ZIZEK'S POLITICS REST ON AN UNHOLY TRINITY OF MARX, LACAN, AND ST. PAUL.

For Zizek, all successful ideologies function the same way. If American-style consumer capitalism has replaced Yugoslavian Marxism as the antagonist, the battle is still the same: to create the conditions for what he calls "politics proper," a vaguely defined, but deeply heroic and inherently universalist impulse, in which a given social order and its power interests are destabilized and overthrown. "Authentic politics is the art of the impossible," he writes. "It changes the very parameters of what is considered 'possible' in the existing constellation."

This is a noble vision, but when Zizek turns to history, he finds only fleeting examples of genuine politics in action: in ancient Athens; in the proclamations of the Third Estate during the French Revolution; in the Polish Solidarity movement; and in the last, heady days of the East German Republic before the Wall came down and the crowds stopped chanting "Wir sind das Volk" ("We are *the* people!") and began chanting "Wir sind ein Volk" ("We are *a/one* people!"). The shift from definite to indefinite article, writes Zizek, marked "the closure of the momentary authentic political opening, the reappropriation of the democratic impetus by the thrust towards reunification of Germany, which meant rejoining Western Germany's liberal-capitalist police/political order."

In articulating his political credo, Zizek attempts to synthesize three unlikely—perhaps incompatible—sources: Lacan's notion of the subject as a "pure void" that is "radically out of joint" with the world, Marx's political economy, and St. Paul's conviction that universal truth is the only force capable of recognizing the needs of the particular. Zizek is fond of calling himself a "Pauline materialist," and he admires St. Paul's muscular vision. He believes that the post-political deadlock can be broken only by a gesture that undermines "capitalist globalization from the standpoint of universal truth in the same way that Pauline Christianity did to the Roman global empire." He adds: "My dream is to combine an extremely dark, pessimistic belief that life is basically horrible and contingent, with a revolutionary social attitude."

AS philosophy, Zizek's argument is breathtaking, but as social prescription, "dream" may be an apt word. The only way to combat the dominance of global capitalism, he argues, is through a "direct socialization of the productive process"—an agenda that is unlikely to play well in Slovenia, which is now enjoying many of the fruits of Western consumer capitalism. When pressed to specify what controlling the productive process might look like, Zizek admits he doesn't know, although he feels certain that an alternative to capitalism will emerge and that the public debate must be opened up to include subjects like control over genetic engineering. Like many who call for a return to the primacy of economics, Zizek has only the most tenuous grasp of the subject.

What then are we to make of Zizek's eloquent plea for a return to politics? Is it just another self-undermining gesture? In part it is, but that may be the point. The blissful freedom of the utopian political moment is something, he believes, we all desire. But so too, he would acknowlege, do we desire ideologies and institutions. And these contradictory impulses—toward liberation and constraint—are not only political. A central tenet of Lacanian psychoanalysis is that the push and pull of anarchic desires and inhibiting defense mechanisms structure the psychic life of the individual. And why shouldn't this same dialectic characterize Zizek's own intellectual life, which has been devoted to proclaiming the universal relevance of Lacan's ideas?

"Do not forget that with me everything is the opposite of what it seems," he says. "Deep down I am very conservative; I just play at this subversive stuff. My most secret dream is to write an old-fashioned, multivolume theological tract on Lacanian theory in the style of Aquinas. I would examine each of Lacan's theories in a completely dogmatic way, considering the arguments for and against each statement and then offering a commentary. I would be happiest if I could be a monk in my cell, with nothing to do but write my *Summa Lacaniana*."

But wouldn't that be lonely? Once again, Zizek qualifies his qualification. "Okay, maybe not a solitary monk. I could be a monk with a woman."

Robert S. Boynton is a contributing editor of *The New Yorker*. His article, "The Bernaliad," appeared in the November 1996 issue of *LF*.

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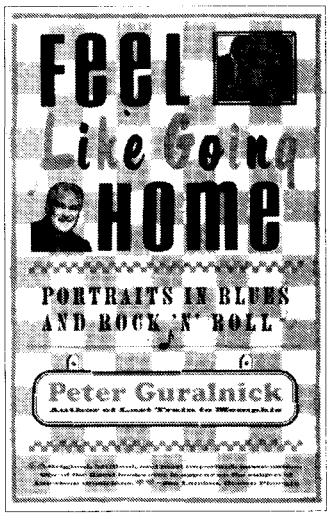

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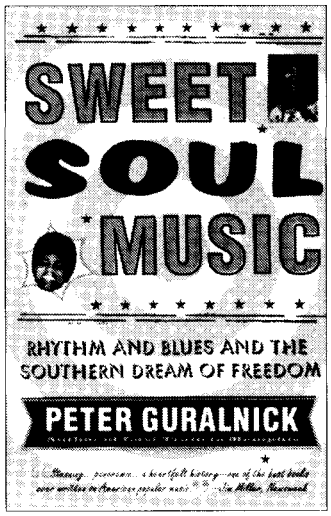

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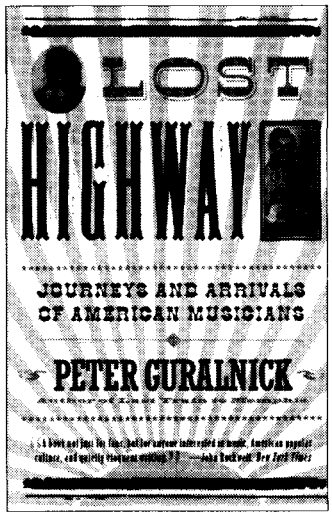

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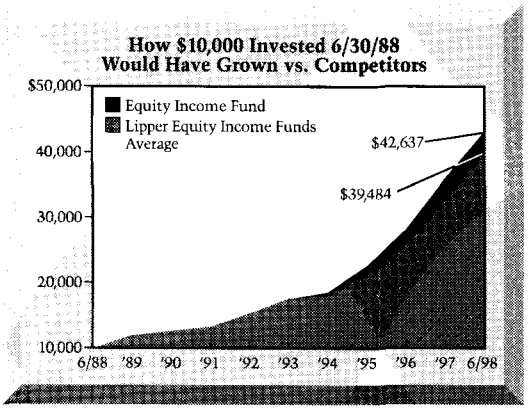

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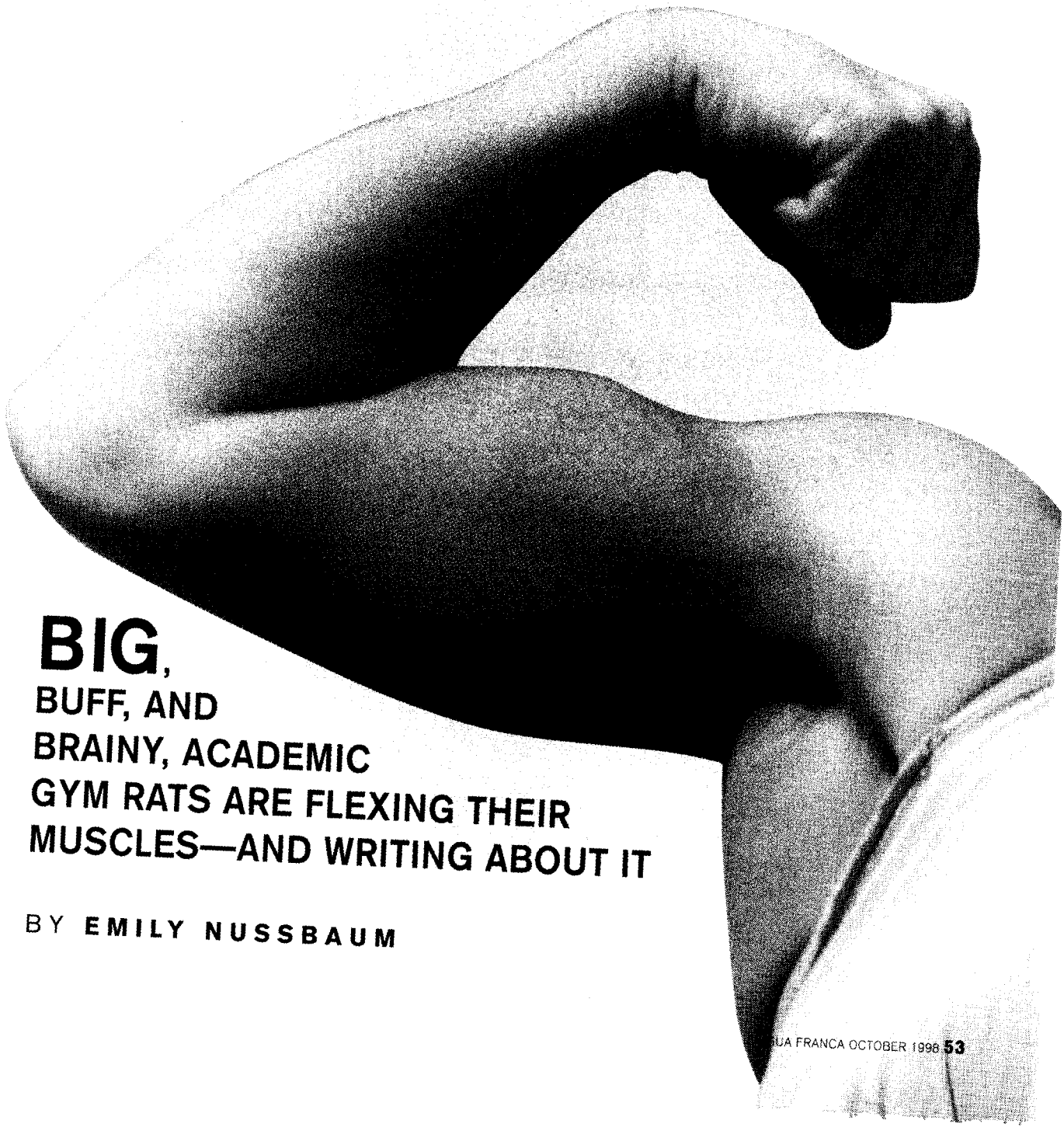

BIG, BUFF, AND BRAINY, ACADEMIC GYM RATS ARE FLEXING THEIR MUSCLES—AND WRITING ABOUT IT

BY **EMILY NUSSBAUM**

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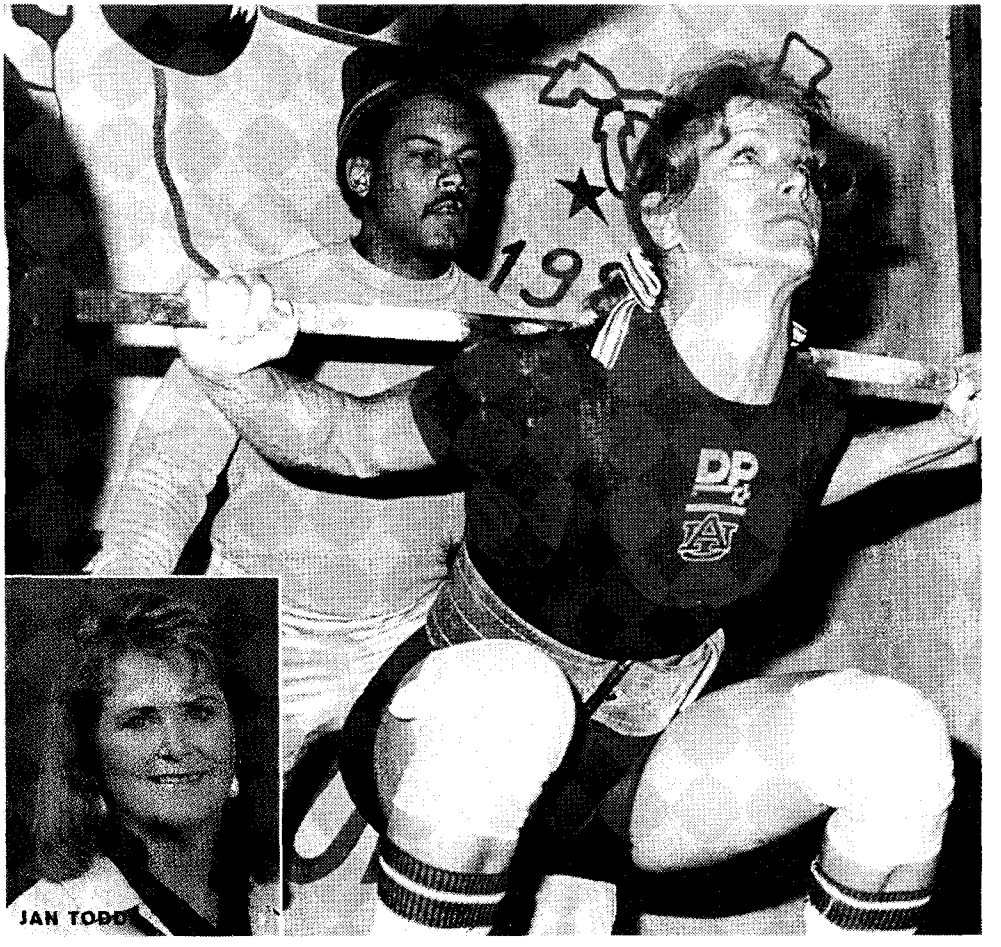

WHEN Terry Todd lumbered into a graduate seminar on Kant at the University of Texas at Austin back in 1966, a 335-pound muscled he-man in a sloppy sweatshirt (the only piece of clothing available in his size), he didn't exactly fit the academic mold. "I didn't look sleep deprived, pale, caffeine driven," he remembers with bemusement, speaking in the honeyed drawl of his native Texas. "I was unusual looking, really massive. There was a bit of disdain from the others, the attitude of 'shouldn't you be down the hall moving a piano?'" And when the quiet strongman spoke up in a class discussion of *The Critique of Pure Reason,* he recalls, his incredulous colleagues stared at him as if he were "some kind of dancing bear."

Todd no longer feels like a freak in academia. In fact, he and his wife Jan—both teach in the American studies and kinesiology programs at the University of Texas—are in the vanguard of a new intellectual interest in the history and culture of weight lifting and bodybuilding. Together, they curate the school's groundbreaking Todd-McLean Physical Culture Collection, a treasure trove of muscle photos, fitness magazines, and workout books. Their journal, *Iron Game History,* founded in 1990, has featured articles ranging from "The Origins of Weight Training for Females in North America" to "Bob Peoples: Deadlift Champion, Strength Theorist, Civic Leader." Elsewhere, an upcoming exhibition at New York City's New Museum of Contemporary Art, *Picturing The Modern Amazon*, will focus on the history and iconography of the strong woman. And a wave of ethnographies, biographies, art historical analyses, psychological studies, and political manifestos has begun to wash over the buff body from every theoretical angle.

Perhaps in the post-Arnold, mid-Xena era, none of this should seem unusual. And in fact, bodybuilding and weightlifting studies fit right into several current academic trends: the hot new field of sports history and sociology, body studies in general, and queer and feminist explorations of androgyny and gender bending. The "built" female body has attracted particular attention, confounding as it does distinctions between masculine and feminine, beautiful and ugly, natural and unnatural, and a lively debate has emerged among feminist scholars about whether female bodybuilders offer a liberating archetype or another retrograde, patriarchal trap for women already pressured to develop the "perfect" body.

Meanwhile, sports historians have delved into the lives of proto-Schwarzeneggers; cultural-studies types have analyzed the shifting class and sexual associations of the muscled male body; and the psychological makeup of the professional bodybuilder has proved catnip for sociologists and psychologists alike. One surprise, however, is that the academics doing work in this field are not simply voyeuristic ninety-eight-pound weaklings lurking among the barbells at Gold's Gym: Many lift seriously, and a few are or have been award-winning competitors in the field. In the 1970s, Jan Todd was named "strongest woman in the world."

"I wanted to put my scholarly pursuits more in line with what I considered my real life," says SUNY Binghamton assistant professor of English Leslie Heywood, a competitive power lifter and the author of *Bodymakers: A Cultural Anatomy of Women's Body Building* (Rutgers, 1998) as well as a memoir, *Pretty Good for a Girl* (Free Press, 1998). Heywood's analysis of women's bodybuilding iconography and culture is, among other things, a call to arms for women to lift weights in the name of feminism, the better to "get big, feel our muscles, our power, our terrible, wonderful, monstrous strengths." Pumping up, she argues, is one way for women to fight patriarchy and heal the wounds of abuse. Ten years ago, she notes, she could not have written the book: "In graduate school, I hid the fact that I

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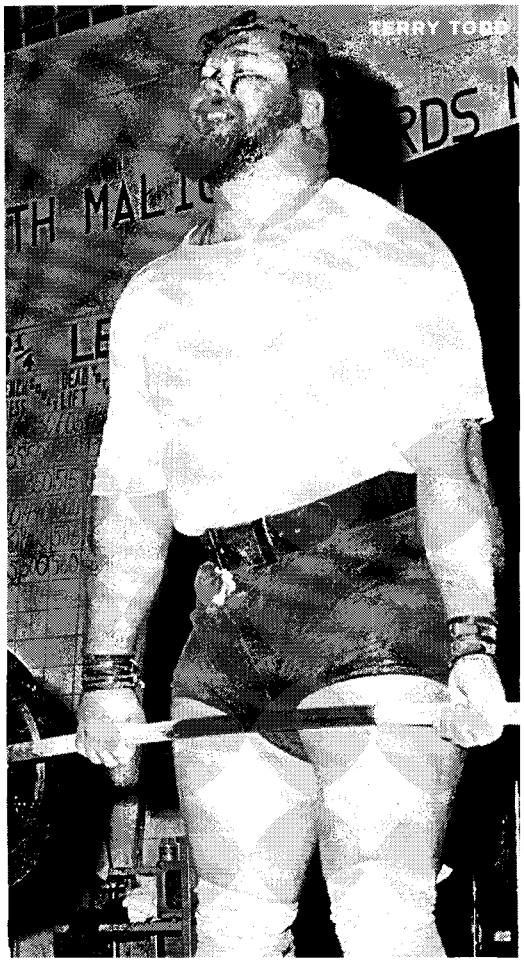

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IN THE 1970s, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PROFESSOR JAN TODD WAS NAMED "STRONGEST WOMAN IN THE WORLD."

lifted, that I was at the gym instead of studying Lacan or at a feminist seminar. It's ironic that lifting was an activity that made me feel more serious, more substantial, yet in academia it's something that would have made me feel branded as someone who wasn't really serious—a body rather than a mind."

Australian professor of French Kenneth Dutton took the opposite career path: He moved from intellectual interest to physical involvement. A colleague of his at the University of Newcastle—Education professor Ron Laura, a former weight lifting champion—dragged Dutton along to a posing competition, a shock to the system for the out-of-shape scholar. "I thought it a curious form of human interaction!" he recalls. "I wasn't sure whether attractive or repulsive. And as usual, I needed to know a bit more about it. There was absolutely a dearth of information, and I thought, all right, I'll write about it."

The impulse led to *The Perfectible Body: The Western Ideal of Male Physical Development* (Continuum, 1995), a wide-ranging analysis of the male bodybuilding motif through Western history, studded with occasional beefcake shots of young men coyly removing their tank tops, in addition to more familiar images, like Michelangelo's statue of David. What's more, Laura and Dutton collaborated on a series of best-selling nonacademic weight lifting guides, including *The Matrix Principle,* a project Dutton calls his "hobby writing." (Dutton, under the guidance of his coauthor, also whipped himself back into shape: "I was in a really unhealthy state indeed, given the wine and food and my being a professor of French.")

All this academic body sculpting hasn't been confined to the gym. Several scholars have displayed their ripped physiques in that traditionally staid environment, the academic panel. Elon College professor of sociology and competitive bodybuilder Anne Bolin,who contributed an article to Pamela Moore's 1997 anthology *Building Bodies* (Rutgers), is known for wearing muscle-baring dresses and heels to speaking engagements and includes slides of herself posing as part of her presentations. (Her Web page welcomes viewers with the sight of the professor clad in a tight white mini dress, biceps and triceps flexed impressively.) And Roland Boer, a lecturer in Hebrew Bible and world religions at Australia's United Theological College and an amateur bodybuilder (though he modestly notes he has more of a "lean body than a built body, so it mixes some of the codes"), shocked a panel at the American Academy of Religion conference last fall when he removed his shirt, unzipped his jeans, stepped out in tight bike shorts and a pink tank top, and struck a pose. The presentation, part of a discussion of Stephen Moore's influential *God's Gym: Divine Male Bodies of the Bible,* a post-structuralist exploration of theological body politics, was well received, although Fordham's Jim McBride, one of the respondents, did have an anxious moment: "I thought, 'Oh my god, he's going to oil up next—how can I top this?'" (Perhaps he shouldn't have been taken aback: After all, the panel was titled "Building Bodies: Transgressive Performance in Religion.")

While some academic writing on bodybuilding has been so theoretical as to seem a bit disembodied, much of the most interesting work has explored the darker real-

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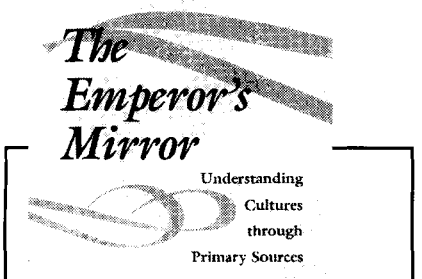
DOES FEMALE BODY-BUILDING OFFER LIBERATION OR A SERVILE CONFORMITY TO MASCULINE NORMS?

life undercurrents of the weight lifting world. Southwestern University sociologist Maria Lowe's *Women of Steel: Female Bodybuilders and the Struggle for Self-Definition* (New York, 1998) examines female bodybuilders, detailing the torturous rituals of dieting and water deprivation required to achieve a "ripped, veiny" look, as well as the industry-wide pressures for women to navigate contradictory demands for muscularity and a bleached-blond, silicone-enhanced hyper-femininity. And in the journal *Psychosomatics*, Harvard psychiatrist Harrison Pope identified a new psychological disorder among bodybuilders he termed "muscle dysmorphia," expressed as a pathological desire to get big at any cost.

In a similarly critical spirit, Northeastern sociologist Alan M. Klein's fascinating ethnography of of elite West Coast gyms, *Little Big Men: Body Building Subculture and Gender Construction* (SUNY, 1993), delves into the rowdy, sometimes brutal, intensely disciplined world of professional bodybuilders, with its pros, owners, "gym rats," "jock-sniffers," wanna-bes, and fetishizing groupies. Klein analyzes the insecurity and narcissism that often fuel the impulse to "get big," even at the expense of financial security and intimate relationships. "Individuating, in the sense of developing healthy object relations with others, seems somewhat problematic for many bodybuilders... Massive physiques talk for you. They broadcast invulnerability and confidence, so you don't have to. But these physiques leave the internal psychological structure weak."

Klein (who lifts weights himself, though he is not a professional bodybuilder) also describes the stigmatized world of "hustling" among the pros. Non-bodybuilding gay men, who are often part of the bodybuilding community as photographers or gym owners, pay struggling bodybuilders for everything from escort services to nude posing to oral sex. This exchange is both mutually exploitative and mutually supportive—providing an economic structure through which bodybuilders can subsidize their grueling hours of unpaid training. But it's also an activity so taboo that Klein initially became aware of it only after overhearing homophobic taunts—bodybuilders accusing each other of hustling.

Most hustling bodybuilders, he writes, identify themselves as heterosexual despite



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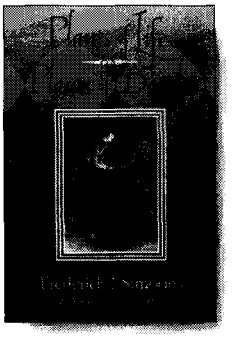

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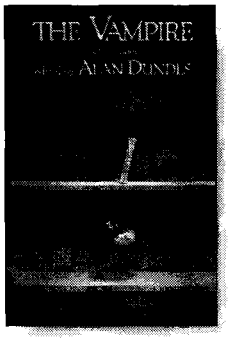

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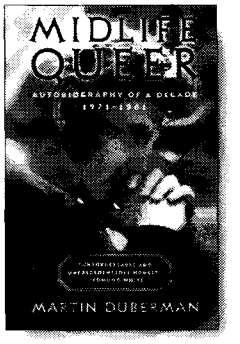

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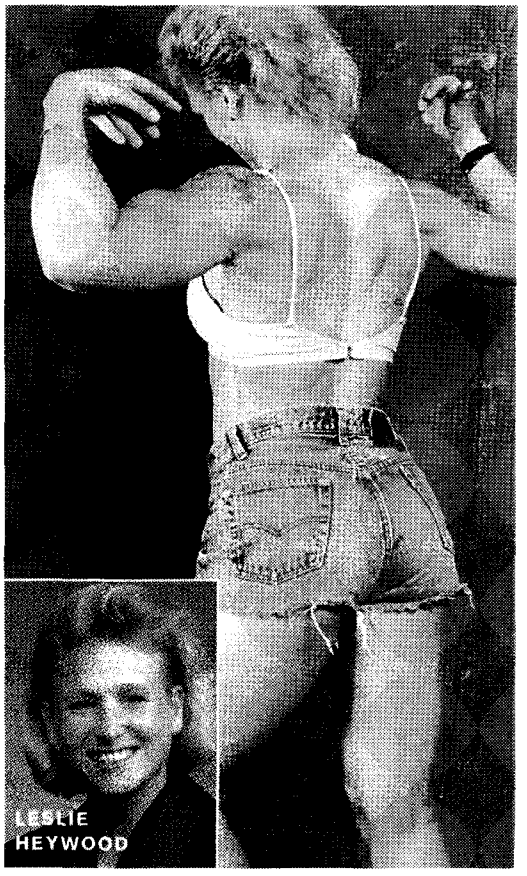
participating in sex with men. To maintain this contradiction, they defend themselves against threats to their "cartoon masculinity" by denigrating the gay men who pay them as weak and therefore womanly. (The contempt is sometimes returned: "These cocky bastards," says one john in a study quoted by Klein. "I like to get them and drain them of their masculinity.") But despite this overt contempt for gay men, Klein writes, many hustlers become addicted to the ego boost that accompanies these relationships, both the sense of control over a "weaker" man and the rush of being desired and admired.

THESE scholarly takes on the weight lifting world are unlikely to find distribution at the Mr. and Mrs. Olympia contests. But at least one book has become required reading in the weight room. Samuel Wilson Fussell's funny, touching autobiography *Muscle: Confessions of an Unlikely Bodybuilder* (Avon, 1991) has achieved a cult following among muscleheads and pencil-necked geeks alike. The tale of a ninety-eight-pound intellectual turned steroid-fueled big man off campus, *Muscle* documents Fussell's slide into the darkest excesses of bodybuilding culture. "To keep from feeling bad, I kept myself from feeling anything at all," writes Fussell, the son of essayist Paul Fussell. Sam Fussell was initially motivated to lift by his terror of feeling vulnerable on the streets of Manhattan. Once he began working out, the terror faded. "Nothing penetrated my muscular armor. I had descended completely into a world of my own, a world based on sets and reps, anabolic steroids and vitamin supplementation, coats of Pro-Tan and Dye-O-Derm, compulsory and optional poses, and protein and carb and sodium and fat ratio." (Fussell's cri de corps inspired a puckish *Pale Fire*-like queer critique by Novid Parsi in Moore's *Building Bodies:* "If Sam thinks that his homophobic, panicky displays of straight masculinity can assure all his readers, and especially himself, that he's not one of them," writes Parsi cheerfully, "then I want to argue, partly through my infectiously faggoty identi-



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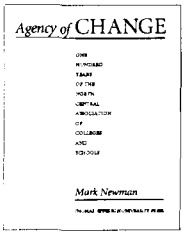

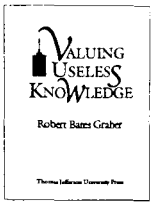

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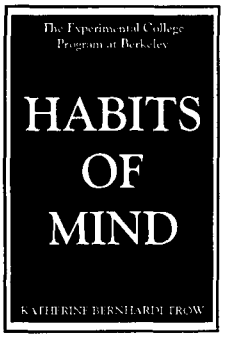

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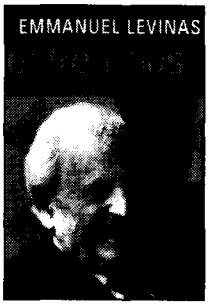

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UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF A WEIGHT LIFTING COLLEAGUE, FRENCH PROFESSOR KENNETH DUTTON WHIPPED HIMSELF BACK INTO SHAPE.

fication with Sam, that the 'them' is indeed 'us' and that—there, there, you poor dear—Sam is not alone in protesting too much." Parsi proceeds to spin Fussell's bodybuilding tale into one big coming-out metaphor.)

While Fussell studies himself, historians reclaim the lost stories of weight lifters and bodybuilders, a complex crew of vaudevillians, circus performers, cunning entrepreneurs, and fitness advocates. David Chapman, one of the few non-lifters in the field, explores the life of the first major celebrity bodybuilder, Eugen Sandow, in his vivid biography, *Sandow the Magnificent* (Illinois, 1994) At the turn of the century, Chapman writes, Sandow transformed the strongman act from crude feats of strength to the display of the idealized human body: The muscular (although, by modern standards, rather chunky) vaudevillian would imitate the poses of classical statuary to the delight of his audience. With the help of Flo Ziegfeld, he became well-known enough that his physique was pictured on everything from collectible postcards to cigar-box labels. (The Mr. Olympia award, the top bodybuilding prize, is still known as "The Sandow.") And he seems to have invented the wimp-to-hulk fantasy of self-improvement out of whole cloth: Sandow, Chapman notes, was never the sickly child he claimed to be to the press.

Sandow's female counterparts were also key figures on the vaudeville stage and in sports history. Former "strongest

LUCKY GYM

TO BENCH OR NOT TO BENCH? FOR PROFESSORS WHO WANT TO BULK UP, THE question of whether to do it under the Panopticon-like gaze of their students is a loaded one.

Of course, pumping iron on campus is a good deal for most faculty members, since it's generally either free or extremely cheap, not to mention convenient. And although running into students can be awkward, it usually involves no more than a nod and a hi. Unfortunately, a few undergrads seem to regard the weight room as an adjunct to the professor's office. "My professor told me to ask you all about phenomenological psychoanalysis," burbled one student excitedly to Marcia Ian, Rutgers English professor and professional bodybuilder—just as Ian was trying to curl solid pounds of iron to her chest.

Like Ian, many scholars prefer to stay off campus, if only because a separate gym offers them both privacy and better facilities than a university. The Emory weight room, complains English professor Richard Rambuss, resembles "a spine-like corridor within a hotel lobby."

Some gyms are more hazardous than others, of course: In 1995, The University of Alaska was sued when a man was trampled to death by a moose while trying to enter the school's gym. "Mr. Ra used poor judgment," responded a school attorney. "If he wanted to enter the gym, there were other entrances available." Eventually, the university settled for $20,000.

As universities scramble to attract fitness-crazed faculty, it may be only a matter of time before gymnasiums become prime recruiting lures. With that thought in mind, *Lingua Franca* offers the following field guide to some of academe's athletic facilities: the kind of gymnasiums that would make even Socrates feel at home, and then again, those that would make him look for a cup of hemlock.—E.N.

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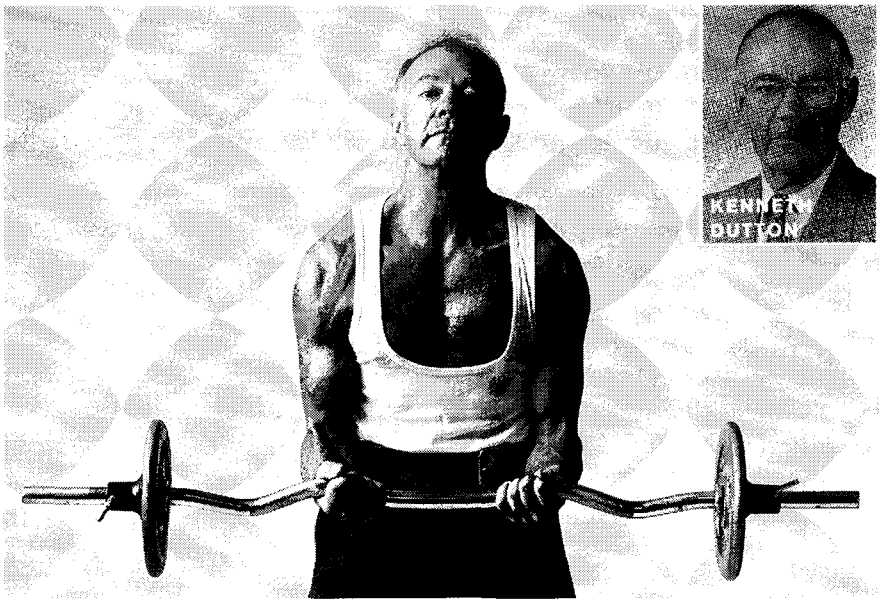

woman in the world" professor Jan Todd has collected the life stories of 150 of the earliest vaudeville strongwomen, some of the first professional American female athletes. Many of these women lived unconventional lives, traveling widely, and even, like popular Ringling Brothers attraction Katie Sandwina, agitating for women's suffrage.

PROTO-feminist Sandwina might be shocked if she could step into a time machine and observe the contemporary hubbub surrounding professional female bodybuilding—a debate triggered back in 1985 with the release of the documentary *Pumping Iron II: The Women*, regarded as a central contribution to the field. Some feminist scholars, including Heywood, Moore, and Bolin, argue that the image of the highly muscled female pro bodybuilder is largely an affirmative one, empowering women, literally, by encouraging them to develop physical strength, as well as messing with strict dichotomies of gender by forcing viewers to question what, exactly, is a "female" or "feminine" body. Joanna Frueh, an art history professor at the University of Nevada at Reno, whose forthcoming *Monster/Beauty: Building the Body of Love* includes two chapters on bodybuilding and who lifts weights herself, takes this perspective. "To a lot of people, women lifters are repugnant and grotesque," she says. "To me, they're beautiful: I do see this as a revolutionary aesthetic. Creating any kind of body requires artifice—letting your body go is 'natural,' for instance, but is it really?" Frueh is particularly interested in the potential of bodybuilding as an alternative model of "aesthetic/erotic" self-creation for older women, breaking them out of the limiting categories of sexpot, crone, and matron. As for the fiery debate

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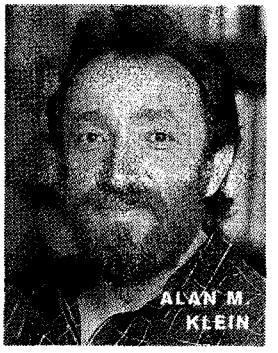
over the chronic use of steroids and breast implants in the professional arena, as well as the elaborate food restrictions before a competition, Frueh, herself drug-free, is unconcerned: "I see it more from an art historian's angle.... It's the creation of a post-human body! I don't condone it or condemn it. It sounds like I'm divorcing process from product, but you can look at the body as a created thing."



To Rutgers English professor Marcia Ian, this view is naive at best. Ian began pumping iron in graduate school, winning several local competitions. Over time, however, she has become critical of both the professional posing circuit (which she calls "utterly backward and retrograde in respect to women")—and especially with the post-modern feminist response to it. In the much-anthologized 1991 essay "From Abject To Object: Women's Body Building," she writes, "I had hoped to find in the gym a communal laboratory for experimental gender-bending, perhaps a haven for the gender-bent, or at the least a democratic republic biologically based on the universality of human musculature." Instead, she says, the culture at the gym and in competition "remains the violent re-inscription of gender binarism, of difference even where there is none." Although she is still "part of the musclehead scene," she says today, "I've come to question the lucidity of feminists who get into bodybuilding as transgression, and indeed the notion of transgression itself as a radical thing—as if it were something more than simply crossing boundaries. It's prey to the same old quasi-dualism that it believes it's so very naughtily deconstructing." She mentions a recent academic gathering in Montreal, where she was asked to pose. "I found that kind bizarre," she says. "I want to be judged on my work. Did they want me to wear a bikini?"

Former power-lifting champion Jan Todd goes further—unsurprisingly, since she and husband, Terry, have been major crusaders against the use of steroids. The problem with professional female bodybuilding, she says, is that it presents as an ideal "bodies that can only be achieved with recourse to drugs, and male hormones at that." Todd adds that she has paid her dues, lifting "more weight than anyone else" and risking the stigma of nonconformity. "But when we start holding up the hyper-muscular as the new goddesses of feminism, I really have problems with that," she explains. "It's saying that to be more of a woman, you have to be more of a man—which can be an unhealthy, somewhat neurotic ideal."

Of course, neither side opposes the idea of lifting weights in general. And there is an important distinction to be made between power lifting, which is judged based on the actual pounds hoisted, and bodybuilding, which is far more prey to the "beauty contest" mentality. (Heywood, for example, power lifts instead of posing because she finds it "a more affirmative community.") In any case, with the increasing seriousness of research on the subject, the comfort level for the atypical jock-academic can only grow. Already there is a crossover into academic editing. Martha Heller, the Rutgers editor of several books in the field, met one of her authors in graduate school: Pamela Moore was her personal trainer. "She helped me build my body, and I helped her build her text," says Heller with a laugh.

Emily Nussbaum is a contributing editor of LF. Her article, "Dr. Strangelove: How Does the Exotic Become Erotic?" appeared in the May/June 1998 issue.

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WHAT ADA KNEW

WAS LORD BYRON'S DAUGHTER THE FIRST COMPUTER PROGRAMMER?

BY **LEV GROSSMAN**

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EVERY PIECE OF SOFTWARE SOLD BY the Microsoft Corporation comes with a small square of densely woven paper bearing the words "Certificate of Authenticity." Hold that paper up to the light, and you'll see a watermark: a woman's head with an elaborate hairdo that makes her look a little like Princess Leia in *Star Wars*.

The caption identifies the woman as "Augusta Ada Byron—Pioneer in Computer Programming," although when she sat for that portrait, in 1838, she was already Augusta Ada King and a countess of Lovelace to boot. To Microsoft, Ada is an auspicious find: a politically correct genesis myth, a mathematician and a woman who drew up the rudiments of a working computer program a century before the first computer would even be built. Ada seems to appeal to institutions: In 1980, the Department of Defense named its proprietary programming language Ada and even trademarked her name. And this year cyberpundit Esther Dyson was awarded the Augusta Ada Lovelace Award by the Association for Women in Computing.

The last twenty-five years have seen steady growth in the Ada Lovelace industry: three full-length biographies, a selection of her letters, and an Ada Lovelace primer for young adults, as well as numerous articles and papers. She's very much a media presence as well. She pops up in Tom Stoppard's 1993 play *Arcadia* and in cyberpunks William Gibson and Bruce Sterling's novel *The Difference Engine* (Bantam, 1991). Earlier this year a movie called *Conceiving Ada*, inspired by her life, was screened at Sundance, starring Tilda Swinton in the title role and featuring a cameo by the late Timothy Leary.

But as the interest in Ada has grown, so have questions about her alleged genius. In 1985, in the most authoritative—and opinionated—biography to date, Dorothy Stein, a professor at the University of London with a degree in psychology and a background in physics and computer programming, deemed the story of Ada's talent and her achievements so much wishful thinking. In Stein's opinion, Ada's grasp of mathematics was tenuous at best. And to add insult to injury, Stein had reservations about Ada's character and sanity as well. Ada's defenders, however, were unswayed. "Stein is out to prove that Ada is both 'bad' and 'mad,'" fumed one in a review of Stein's work in *The Byron Journal*. With such a hostile agenda, the reviewer argued, no wonder Stein failed "to see why and how Ada was able to predict the impact of today's computer revolution."

And so the debate continues. Was Ada a genius or a dilettante? A madwoman or a martyr? And why is it so difficult to decide? After all, the basic facts of her life are well documented and not in dispute. As Lord Byron's daughter (yes, *that* Lord Byron), she was a celebrity even in her own time, and her relatively small oeuvre has survived in its entirety. Ada herself had few doubts about her abilities. "That *brain* of mine is something more than merely *mortal*, as time will show," she wrote to her friend, the British mathematician Charles Babbage. "Before ten years are out, the Devil's in it if I haven't sucked out some of the life-blood from the mysteries of this universe, in a way that no purely mortal lips or brains could do."

Her father's achievements were no match for her ambition: "I do *not* believe that my father was (or ever could have been) such a *Poet* as *I shall* be an *Analyst*," she wrote in 1843. Then again, her parents' marriage was a disastrous one—it survived her birth, in 1815, by only a month—and, brought up by her mother, Ada was not disposed to harbor great admiration for her father. He died when she was eight, under suspicion of crimes ranging from sodomy, pederasty, and homosexuality to incest with his half sister Augusta Leigh.

Under the influence of her mother, an unbending disciplinarian and competent amateur mathematician in her own right, Ada turned early to mathematical pursuits. At the time, it took some doing for a woman to get mathematical instruction, trigonometry not being considered an asset in the marriage market, but Lady Byron was determined that her daughter should follow in her unorthodox footsteps. Furthermore, she saw academic study as a means of expunging from her daughter all traces of her husband's dangerously flamboyant temperament. "My daughter is...just beginning to learn her letters," she wrote in 1818, when Ada was two. "I have given her this occupation, not so much for the sake of early acquirement, as to fix her attention, which from the activity of her imagination is rather difficult."

WHAT we know of Ada's early education is suitably ghastly. She was forced to lie absolutely still during her lessons, and if she moved even her hands, Lady Byron put black bags on them and shut her up in a closet. When she was twelve, Ada became preoccupied with the idea of learning to fly, and she wrote her mother long letters detailing her plans for a book on "Flyology": "I shall be able to fly about with all your letters and messages and shall be able to carry them with much more speed than the post or any other *terrestrial* contrivances." As Ada grew older, she showed signs of having inherited some of Byron's passionate personality, her mother's educational ministrations notwithstanding, and when she was seventeen, she had an affair with her tutor that came close enough to consummation to endanger grievously her marital prospects. Nevertheless, at nine-

LORD BYRON

"I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT MY FATHER WAS SUCH A POET AS I SHALL BE AN ANALYST," WROTE BYRON'S DAUGHTER.

CORBIS-BETTMANN

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teen Ada was safely and advantageously married to William King, later earl of Lovelace, an earnest and well-educated individual. Her mother kept her out of the public eye as best she could, but it can be taken as a measure of the English fascination with Ada that in 1837, when she was only twenty-one, no less an author than Disraeli published the semi-biographical *Venetia,* a novel about a precocious young girl raised under the shadow of her mad, bad poet of a father. Despite being, in her words, "not naturally or originally fond of children," Ada gave birth to three. But her interest in mathematics only increased with her marriage, and she continued her studies under the direction of some distinguished mentors, including Mary Somerville, for whom Somerville College at Oxford is named and with whose career Ada's is often compared. (It is emblematic of the paradoxical status of women scientists of the period that although a bust of Somerville was placed in the hall of the Royal Society as a woman she was not allowed to enter the building.)

In 1844, another tutor, the able Augustus De Morgan, reported to Ada's mother in a letter that Ada's abilities were "utterly out of the common way for any beginner, man or woman," and he singled out for praise both her fierce determination to understand the fundamental principles of mathematics and her refusal to be satisfied with them—"her obvious determination to try not only to reach but to get beyond, the present bounds of knowledge."

But the brilliant, irascible Charles Babbage was the mentor with whom Ada's name would be linked for the ages. Babbage was educated at Cambridge, where as a student he founded a society that succeeded in converting the university from Newton's old-fashioned mathematical notation to the more practical system developed by Leibniz, which was then in use on the Continent and is universally applied today. As a man of independent means, Babbage was able to publish and pursue his research more or less independent of academic employment; at the time, the line between the amateur and professional practice of mathematics was a thin one. He was famously brusque and willing to offend, but he was also widely respected, if not well liked, during his lifetime. In 1828, without ever having taught a class, he was awarded the greatest honor then available to an English mathematician, the Lucasian Chair in Mathematics at Cambridge—Newton's chair.

Ada met Babbage at a party when she was just seventeen. Soon after, he invited her to observe the prototype of a device he called the Difference Engine, a mechanical calculator made of rods and gears that performed basic mathematical operations at the turn of a crank. Within its mechanism, a number existed as a column of rotating discs. Like a rotating lock on a briefcase, each disc was set to a particular digit of a larger number. At the time, navigation and astronomy—as well as the budding actuarial business—were dependent on lengthy tables of calculations, which were enormously expensive and labor-intensive to produce, and usually full of errors anyway. Babbage's Difference Engine was supposed to change all that, and the British government had given him money to build it.

In 1842, Ada and Babbage began a formal collaboration. Two years earlier, Babbage had made a trip to Turin to lecture at a conference, and a young Italian engineer named Luigi Menabrea (who later became a prime minister of Italy) was so impressed that he wrote a brief monograph on Babbage's work. Babbage had by then abandoned the still-unfinished Difference Engine for a second, more sophisticated device that he called the

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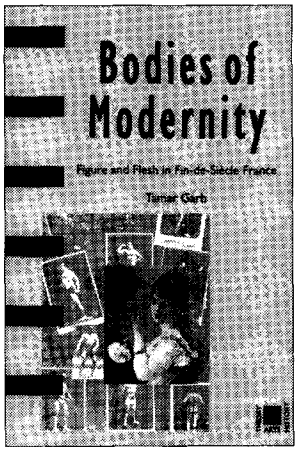

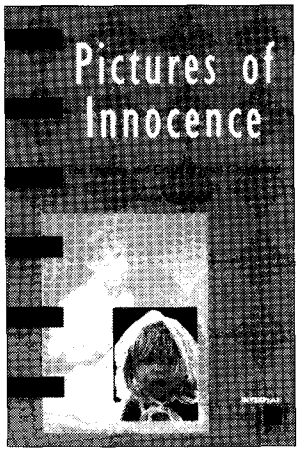

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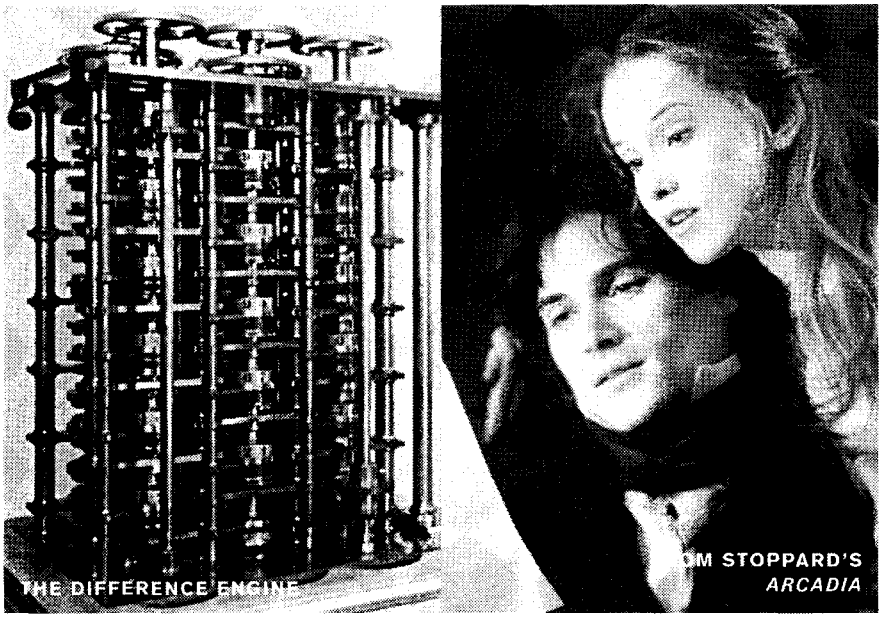
TILDA SWINTON STARRED IN THE FILM "CONCEIVING ADA," WHICH DEBUTED EARLIER THIS YEAR.

Analytical Engine, which would be able to perform much more complex calculations than its predecessor. Ada decided to translate Menabrea's article, with the idea that it would make a manageable first project for a journeyman scholar, which at the age of twenty-six she still decidedly was. (As it happens, Mary Somerville had started her career the same way, by translating Laplace's *Traité de mécanique céleste*.) When Babbage heard about Ada's translation, he suggested that she add to it some notes of her own.



THE DIFFERENCE ENGINE

M STOPPARD'S *ARCADIA*

Those notes, which appeared with the translation in 1843, constitute Ada's most important—almost her only—published work. There were seven of them, lettered A through G, and altogether they're more than twice as long as the article to which they are appended. The notes clarify and expand on Menabrea's explanation of the Analytical Engine and discuss the engine's structure and the principles governing its functions, as well as the ways in which it improves on the Difference Engine. Ada also imagined possible applications of the Analytical Engine, such as the composition of computer-generated music, and even ruminated, skeptically, on the possibility of artificial intelligence. Her prose is eloquent and clear, arguably more so than anything Babbage wrote on the subject, and contains some memorable phrases. In note A, for example, she writes that "the Analytical Engine *weaves algebraical patterns* just as the Jacquard-loom weaves flowers and leaves." She includes some rather pointed hints intended to encourage the British government, or somebody, to help fund its development. In the end, however, it was never built.

ONE OF the major advances of the Analytical Engine over the Difference Engine was its ability to accept information and instructions in the form of punched cards, a mechanism that Babbage borrowed from the automated Jacquard looms (the same looms that the Luddites were fond of smashing). While the Difference Engine was conceived to do only the basic, one-step arithmetical functions required for navigation tables, the Analytical Engine was capable, as Babbage put it, of "eating its own tail": of performing a calculation, obtaining a result, and then performing further calculations based on those initial results, and so on. It would have been a powerful tool for research mathematicians, although its practical applications were less obvious to the bean counters of the British government.

To show off the Analytical Engine's flexibility, Ada diagrams a sequence of twenty-five commands by means of which the engine could be made to calculate Bernoulli numbers, a complex and demanding numerical series. In doing so, she anticipated some of the techniques used by future computer programmers, and it is on the strength of this diagram that Ada is often referred to as the first computer programmer.

But was she? In his autobiographical *Passages From the Life of a Philosopher*, published some ten years after Ada's death, Babbage himself is cryptic on this matter. In a few ambiguous paragraphs, he manages to flatter both Ada's genius and his own:

> I asked why [Ada] had not herself written an original paper on a subject with which she was so intimately acquainted? I then suggested that she should add some notes to Menabrea's memoir; an idea which was immediately adopted. We discussed together the various illustrations that might be introduced: I suggested several, but the selection was entirely her own. So also was the algebraic working out of the different problems, except, indeed, that relating to the numbers of Bernouilli [sic], which I had offered to do to save Lady Lovelace the trouble. This she sent back to me for an amendment, having detected a grave mistake which I made in the process.

Was Ada onto something original in her notes, or was she merely Babbage's amanuensis? The answer is not at all obvious, hanging as it does on ticklish definitions of program and computer and on determining the authorship of documents that are, to some unknown extent, collaborations.

The notes would turn out to be Ada's magnum opus: Her health took an increasing toll on her work. She was ill for almost her entire life, with symptoms that ranged from bloating to asthma to seizures and, for several years of her adolescence, partial paralysis. Some scholars have proposed that she was manic-depressive or that she suffered from porphyria, the hereditary illness that afflicted King George III. Whatever the cause, her state of mind oscillated between despairing lows and dizzying, delusional heights, both of which are reflected in her voluminous correspondence. "No one knows

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS (LEFT); PHOTOFEST (RIGHT)

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IN 1985, DOROTHY STEIN ATTEMPTED TO DEBUNK THE ADA LEGEND.

what almost *awful* energy & power lie yet undeveloped in that *wiry* little system of mine," she wrote to Babbage in 1843. "It is perhaps well for the world that my line & ambition is ever *spiritual*; & that I have not taken it into my head, or lived in times & circumstances calculated to put it into my head, to deal with the sword, poison & intrigue, in place of *x, y,* & *z.*" She fantasized about producing grand, totalizing theories that would unite disparate areas of knowledge and called herself the "Elijah of Science": "I have my hopes, & very distinct ones too, of one day getting *cerebral* phenomena such that I can put them into mathematical equations; in short a *law, or laws,* for the mutual actions of the molecules of the brain."

In its last decade, Ada's life became a swirl of false starts, impassioned letters, agonizing illnesses, and a ruinous addiction to gambling. By 1851, she had managed to lose £3,200 gambling on horses, and, to pay off her debts, she secretly pawned some of the family jewels and took out an insurance policy on her own life. At her request, Dickens came to her sickbed and read to her from *Dombey and Son*. She died in November 1852 of what is believed to have been cervical cancer, with her husband and mother blaming each other for her downfall and for the squandering of her genius. She was thirty-six, the same age her father had been when he died. She was interred with her coffin touching his.

THE contemporary battle over Ada's mind and soul began a hundred years later, when, in 1953, one Bertram Bowden, a researcher at the British firm Ferranti Ltd., which produced an early commercial electronic computer, edited one of the first histories of computers called *Faster Than Thought*. He came across Ada's notes while researching Babbage, whom he regarded as the father of the modern computer, and it was in his writing that the idea of Ada as prophet first took shape. "Her ideas are so modern," he wrote, "that they have become of great topical interest once again." Bowden was able to examine some of Ada's papers, which were in the possession of her granddaughter, and he reprinted her notes in their entirety for the first time in a hundred years. Bowden praises her for displaying a "remarkable understanding of Babbage's ideas" and for creating "a program for computing the Bernoulli numbers."

Bowden's enthusiasm was catching. The Ada Lovelace legend found its first devoted chronicler in Doris Langley Moore, a Byron scholar whose *Ada, Countess of Lovelace: Byron's Legitimate Daughter* (1977) gave a headily Romantic account of its subject. In Moore's work, Ada emerges as very much her father's daughter: beautiful, arrogant, moody, brilliant—Childe Harold in mathematical drag. Moore had access to the same materials Bowden did, and her examination of them was far more extensive and systematic, but she had no mathematical background, and she takes Babbage's assessment of Ada's mathematical gifts in his autobiography entirely at face value.

The Ada legend blossomed and spread largely unchallenged until 1985, when Dorothy Stein published *Ada: A Life and Legacy*. As biography, Stein's book borders on the poison-pen; according to one Lovelace scholar, Moore was so outraged by it that she refused a request to review it. But *Ada* cannot be dismissed so easily. As Lovelace scholars go, Stein has all the right stuff: Along with a background in physics, psychology, and computers, she has taught in the women's studies program at the University of Hawaii. She was the first contemporary scholar rigorously to examine the documents that make up Ada's mathematical

THE ANALYTICAL ENGINE

CHARLES BABBAGE WAS NOT THE FIRST THINKER TO DEVISE A CALCULATING machine: Pascal and Leibniz both designed mechanical calculators, although Babbage's was by far the more sophisticated. He began thinking about and working on the Analytical Engine in 1833, while progress on his Difference Engine, an earlier version, was temporarily suspended due to financial problems.

The Analytical Engine, unlike any calculator before it, is divided into parts that are structurally and functionally analogous to the components of a modern electronic computer. It receives input in the form of punched cards: the punched cards carry either commands for the engine to execute or numbers for it to operate on. It has a memory unit, called the store, in which the numbers it works with are stored in the form of brass rods with discs mounted on them at regular intervals. There is a central processing unit, called the mill, that performs the mathematical operations on these numbers. When the operation is completed, the Analytical Engine prints out its results, either on paper or on metal or pasteboard punched cards. In the meantime, it is capable of giving error messages by ringing bells and flashing signs to its operator.

Constantly short on funds, Babbage was never able to build a working Analytical Engine, although he hit on the idea of teaching it to play tic-tac-toe as a promotional scheme. When he died, in 1871, he was at work on a third, even more advanced engine, of which little is known. — **L.G.**

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legacy. "I started my research under the same assumptions that others have brought to the Ada story," says Stein. "I was mainly interested in finding out, from her correspondence and other documents, why she did no other work in mathematics and/or computers in the eight years before her death."

What she found is that "Ada was neither a mathematician nor a computer programmer." Later scholars, she writes in *Ada*, "have built upon Babbage's generous tribute and its even more generous implications. In the manner of all mythology, elements have accreted to the story that have only tenuous connection with the original." She remarks on the tendency of otherwise responsible historians to get a little giddy in Ada's intoxicating presence—in one book, Jerry Rosenberg's *The Computer Prophets*, the author credits her with the invention of binary arithmetic.

Surprisingly, Stein does concede that Ada wrote what amounts to a computer program, but she takes a good deal of trouble to undercut this achievement by arguing that Ada was a lousy mathematician and that, even if she did write a computer program, it was wholly derivative: Babbage and Menabrea, she asserts, had done essentially the same before her.

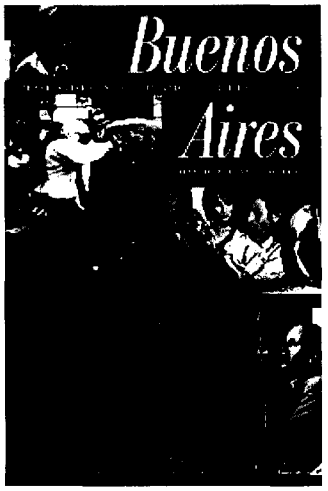
Stein begins by carefully tracking Ada's mathematical education, seeking to establish that she didn't know enough math to have written the notes on her own. She focuses on the difficulties Ada had, in her correspondence with her tutors, in performing what appear to be relatively simple algebraic operations involving the substitution of one mathematical symbol or expression for another. "Only extremely dogged application," Stein argues, "would have sufficed to compensate for a deficiency in native quickness and talent, especially for assimilating the mathematical techniques of symbol manipulation."

Stein also undercuts the testimony of those among Ada's contemporaries who had anything nice to say about her mathematical aptitude. For example, she dismisses the flattering passage in Babbage's autobiography on the grounds that it was written twenty years after Ada and Babbage worked seriously together; that Babbage was generously trying to shore up Ada's reputation, which was clouded by posthumous rumors of gambling and adultery; and that the autobiography itself was in part intended to promote his inventions, and thus "he had every inducement to value the most important piece of propaganda in favor of his masterpiece."

Of the notes themselves, Stein is a mercilessly close reader, and she digs up some damaging dirt. For example, when Menabrea's article appeared in 1842, in the *Bibliothèque Universelle de Genève*, it included a printer's error: *le cos. de n* = ∞. As printed, the passage is nonsensical—cosine would ordinarily be abbreviated cos, without a period, and a cosine can never have a value greater than one—but Ada translated it as printed, without comment. (In the correct version, *le cos.* becomes *le cas*, giving the translation: "the case of n = infinity.") Stein takes Ada's mistake as damning evidence of her shaky understanding of even basic trigonometry.

Another of Stein's criticisms hinges on the question of whether or not the Analytical Engine could be made to perform symbolic manipulations—that is, whether it could generate solutions that included variables (like x and y) as well as constants (like 2 and 7). Ada argues throughout her notes that it can. "The engine can arrange and combine its numerical quantities exactly as if they were *letters* or any other *general* symbols," she writes in note E, "and in fact it might bring out its results in algebraical *notations*, were provisions made accordingly." Stein argues convincingly that this was a serious misunderstanding of the way the engine would have operated. Mechanically, there was no way for a value to be represented within the Analytical Engine as a variable rather than a constant. Christopher Green, a professor of psychology at York University in Toronto who is preparing his own skeptical study of Ada and is a Stein supporter, agrees that the question is a crucial one: "This is an important point for understanding Ada's competence, for if the engine, in fact, could *not* do algebra, then we have to explain why she said so baldly in her notes that it could."

When it comes to Ada's alleged authorship of the first computer program, Stein turns her skepticism on the claim of originality. True, Stein admits, unlike earlier calculating machines, the Analytical Engine was sufficiently flexible that it had



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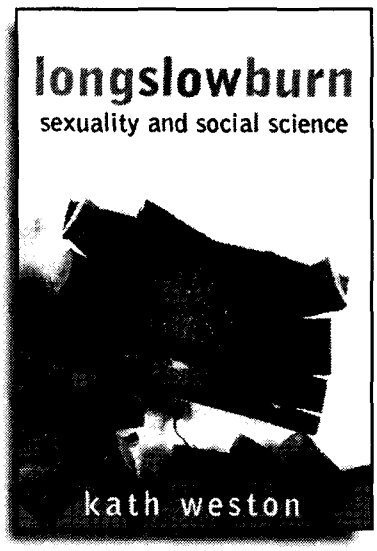

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ONE AUTHOR CREDITS ADA WITH THE INVENTION OF BINARY ARITHMETIC.

to be given highly specific, sequential instructions before it could perform a task; that is, it was programmable. Therefore, she acknowledges grudgingly, Ada's instructions constitute a genuine program. Nevertheless, she hastens to add, Menabrea had already created a diagram that, in his words, represents "the whole assemblage of operations requisite for resolving [two specific] equations of the first degree." Hence, Stein writes, Menabrea's diagram constituted the first computer program, although even that claim is dubious, she insists, since Menabrea's chart was based on the charts Babbage brought with him to Turin. At best, Ada's work was derivative, although Stein does grant that she added some stylistic "embellishments and improvements."

Finally, Stein makes it clear that Ada wasn't a particularly pleasant person: She was arrogant, fickle, tactless, possibly insane, a faithless wife, and a lousy mother. The story Stein tells in *Ada* would almost be comic if it all didn't end so sadly.

STEIN may well have imagined that *Ada* would finally put to rest a long-standing historical fraud. After all, she wasn't alone in her skeptical assessment of Ada's work. In his 1982 biography, *Charles Babbage: Pioneer of the Computer*, Anthony Hyman had already written that "there is not a scrap of evidence that Ada ever attempted original mathematical work, and what's more, Ada was probably the third or fourth person in the world to write simple programs...and they are student exercises rather than original work." But in 1986, an English professor at CUNY named Joan Baum shot back with *The Calculating Passion of Ada Byron*, an ardent defense of Ada's genius.

The real wrestling in Baum's book occurs in the footnotes, many of which are devoted to arguing with Stein at length. Baum takes Stein to task for holding the notes to too high a standard—for treating them as if they were intended to be a single, unified blueprint for a future computing machine rather than a series of annotations to a wholly separate work that was itself little more than an outline. Baum also zeros in on ambiguities in Stein's reading of the notes, pointing out simple interpretive judgment calls that could as easily go for Ada as against her. As for the case of the translated printer's error, Baum argues that if Ada missed it, to our knowledge Babbage never remarked on it either, nor did Mary Somerville or Augustus De Morgan, both of whom read the notes.

Ada's disciples have virtually ostracized Stein. When a selection of Ada's letters was published in 1992, Stein's book wasn't even listed in the bibliography. The letters were edited by Betty Toole, a computer science professor at Dominican College in San Rafael, California. She added extensive biographical material and is one of the most outspoken scholars on the subject of Ada's mythic significance. "I probably know more about this than any human being alive," she says proudly. To Toole, Ada represents a grand archetypal synthesis, in which Lord and Lady Byron come to stand for two diametrically opposed points of view: "her mother, the exemplar of the new industrial age who could use analysis, facts, and objectivity to gain her clearly defined goals, and her father, the Romantic poet, who took life as it came without predetermined goals, who used imagination to view the world through a subjective lens." In the manner of Alvin Toffler or a sentimental Bill Gates, Toole goes on to offer the fond hope that Ada might serve as a model for our touchy-feely, high-tech future.

Clearly, Stein's work has done little to diminish the force of the Ada legend. "I have been really bewildered by the kinds of attacks that have been made on my book and its author," says Stein, adding dryly, "If scholars wish to romanticize her, it is not their scholarly attributes but other human interests that lead them to do so."

If the advent of electronic computers gave us new incentive for turning to Ada's life and work, the rise of the Internet does so all over again. In this context, *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women + The New Technoculture* (1997) by the colorful

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English cultural theorist Sadie Plant is emblematic. Plant's book is a kind of secret history of women and the information age. Contrary to the prevailing stereotypes, she argues, women have always been behind the development of the computer, and, moreover, the computers and the information networks they help create militate against the classically patriarchal hierarchies and modes of thought that they were ostensibly created to preserve. "Hardware, software, wetware," she writes, "women have always been the simulators, assemblers, and programmers of the digital machines."

Ada Lovelace is, of course, the heroine of this quasi-historical narrative. To Plant she is a representative figure, one of the few visible, documented examples of the role that millions of women have played in maintaining the information infrastructure of the Western world, whether as telephone operators, or as secretaries, or even as biological transmitters of genetic information. Although Plant concedes that Ada had no particular influence on the machines that were to come, she sees in Ada's writing a prescient understanding of the dynamics of electronic information flows, making her a cyberfeminist *avant la lettre.*

IF by their nature historical personalities are destined to elude us, given that their lives are generally available only through their own and others' writings, Ada is doubly or even triply evasive: Her most important work took the form of footnotes to a text describing an entity that existed entirely as speculation and a few spare parts. And then there is the added problem that to deal with Ada requires expertise in various, often mutually unintelligible fields of study. Undeniably then, knowing Ada involves real intellectual challenges. But what about the passion she provokes in her adherents and detractors? Perhaps some of the dispute over her place in history stems from our own uneasy relationship to technology as it encroaches on ever more intimate aspects of our daily lives. Ada, the mythological Ada, is everything that computers aren't but that we wish they were: brilliant, mad, ecstatic, romantic, sexual. In short, human.

Lev Grossman's first novel, *Warp*, was published by St. Martin's Press in 1997.

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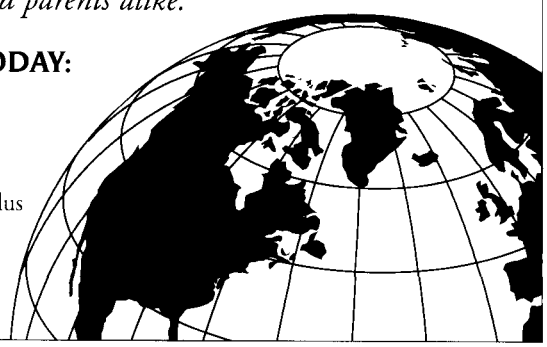

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Georgia Institute of Technology

The Georgia Institute of Technology invites applications and nominations for the position of Dean of the Ivan Allen College.

The Georgia Institute of Technology is internationally known as a major technological university. Georgia Tech is ranked among the top ten public universities in the nation and has over 13,000 students. Georgia Tech is a prominent leader in national and international higher education and is a Carnegie 1 Research University. The average SAT scores of the entering class and number of national merit scholars consistently rank at or among the top of the nation's public universities. The State of Georgia, well known for its support of higher education, provides full tuition Hope Scholarships to students graduating from Georgia high schools with a B average or higher.

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The Dean of the Ivan Allen College reports to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and is responsible for the administration and development of the college's academic and research programs, personnel, budgeting, and fund-raising. The Dean interacts on behalf of the College with other units of the university and with the various external constituencies associated with Georgia Tech. The Dean is part of the general management of the institution.

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Screening of candidates will begin October 15, 1998, and continue until the position is filled. Applications and nominations, along with a curriculum vitae and names and addresses of possible references, and a letter outlining activities and interest in interdisciplinary programs and fundraising should be sent to: Chair, Dean Search Committee, CHE03, Ivan Allen College, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA 30332-0525.

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Harriet A. Lundberg, Search Committee
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Hartford, CT: Monthly, 1998–1999

THE LITERARY IMAGINATION

The Fourth Annual Conference of the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics will take place October 2–4 in Toronto, at the Toronto Hilton. The roster of speakers will include Richard Poirier, Margery Sabin, and Philip Horne on "Prose Argument"; Geoffrey Hill, Sarah Spence, and John Peck on "The Language of Poetry and the Language of the State"; Richard Howard, Roger Shattuck, and Christie McDonald on Proust; and Peter Burian, Frank Hoff, and Kenneth Gross on "Varieties of Dramatic Performance." The conference will also feature a poetry reading by Geoffrey Hill, and an address by Margaret Atwood, "Negotiating with the Dead," at the banquet on Saturday night. For registration information, please contact the ALSC office, phone: (510) 849-2491, fax (510) 849-2492, email: alitsc@aol.com.

Toronto, Ontario: October 2–4, 1998

POPULAR MUSIC & THE INSTITUTION

The International Association for the Study of Popular Music (U.S. Chapter) announces "For What It's Worth: Institutions & Popular Music/ Institutionalizing Popular Music." Although the subject of popular music and the concept of institutions would appear to be antithetical, much of the cultural capital affiliated with popular music predicates itself upon notions of anti-authoritarian individualism. At the same time, popular music and its analysts are irreparably connected to any number of institutions. The conference aims to critique and theorize about how these bodies contain and direct our understanding of popular music. For information on the conference or group: Dr. David Sanjek, c/o BMI Archives, 320 W. 57th St., New York, NY 10019. E-mail: dsanjek@bmi.com.

Los Angeles, CA: October 16–18, 1998

COEDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

In celebration of the tenth anniversary of coeducation at Wheaton, the college will host a conference to examine the critical gender issues involved in educating women and men together, "Coeducation for the 21st Century: A Working Conference on Educating Women and Men for the Future." Explore how liberal arts colleges can further gender equity in learning and in life; plan for a future in which women and men want to share the world with each other and will know how. Keynote speakers: Evelyn Fox Keller, MIT; Michael Kimmel, State University of New York at Stony Brook; Ronald Taylor, Temple University. To register or learn more, visit www.wheatoncollege.edu/coedconference, or write to Kersti Yllo, Coed Conference, Wheaton College, Norton, MA 02766, or at kyllo@wheatoncollege.edu.

Norton, MA: October 30–31, 1998

BEAUTY AND BUSINESS

The Hagley Museum and Library will hold a conference entitled, "Beauty and Business," on March 26, 1999. We invite proposals for papers that address historically the role played by business in the development and transformation of modern notions of beauty, and the ways in which changing conceptions of beauty have in turn influenced business practices. We encourage submissions that consider race, ethnicity, and gender, and discuss men or women. We are especially intersted in discussions of fashion, color, cosmetics, fragrance, and hair styling, and related issues of production, marketing, and business organization. Kathy Peiss, author of "Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture" and professor of history at University of Massachusetts–Amherst, will provide the keynote address. Funds may be available for speakers to support travel to the conference. Paper proposals are due by November 1, 1998, with notification by December 1. Proposals should include an abstract of no more than 500 words and a brief c.v. Please direct proposals and queries to Dr. Roger Horowitz, Associate Director, Center for the History of Business, Technology, and Society, Hagley Museum and Library, P.O. Box 3630, Wilmington, DE 19807. email: rh@udel.edu; direct fax: (302) 655-3188

Wilmington, DE: November 1, 1998

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FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ADVERTISE YOUR CONFERENCE ON THIS PAGE,
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GERMANY AND AFRICAN AMERICANS

Reprising the successful international exchange featured by the landmark "Japan and African Americans: A Comparative Perspective," the Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center welcomes scholars from Germany this year in a globally influenced exploration of African American Studies: "Germany and African Americans: A Comparative Perspective." Presentations include: "Rethinking Race after National Socialism: German Reconstruction & the 'Problem' of African American Occupation Children"; "The NAACP's Perspective on Nazism"; and "African American GI's in Post-War Germany." This year's conference is co-sponsored by the Institute of African American Research and the German Historical Institute. For further information, please contact Dr. Gerald Horne, Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center, CB#5250, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5250; (919) 962-9001; shsbcc@email.unc.edu.

Chapel Hill, NC: November 2, 1998

WWW AND CULTURAL THEORY

The Center for the Humanities at Drake University announces "WWW and Contemporary Cultural Theory: Magic, Metaphor and Power." This conference will bring together scholars from across the humanities and social sciences who will explore aspects of the Web in terms of contemporary cultural theory. In general, we will explore the Web as a site characterized by a nexus of complex economic, political, social, and aesthetic forces. Specifically, participants will engage in the thematic issues of the web as a space where metaphor, magic, and power converge. Participants include: Steven Jones, Stuart Moulthrop, Anne Balsamo, Rob Shields, Jody Berland, Sean Cubitt, Cynthia Fuchs, Robert Niedeffer, Benjamin Bratton, Theresa Senft, Vincent Mosco, John Sloop, Nancy Kaplan, Robert McChesney, Andrew Herman, and Thomas Swiss. Registration is $40 and is open to the public. Visit <http://www.multimedia.drake.edu/webconference/index.html>, or contact Nancy Smith, Howard Hall, Drake University, Des Moines, IA 50311. Ph: 515-271-4615; email <nancy.smith@drake.edu>

Des Moines, IA; November 6–7, 1998

THE CULTURAL TURN

The Cultural Turn conferences are biannual meetings seeking to explore and expand the analytic zone shared and contested between the social sciences and humanities. The second conference will be held at UC Santa Barbara, February 5-7, 1999. The theme of this second conference will be power and meaning. Featured speakers include: M. Christine Boyer, Princeton University; N. Katherine Hayles, UCLA; Bruce Lincoln, University of Chicago; Orlando Patterson, Harvard University; James W. Scott, Yale University; Michael Taussig, Columbia University. Other participants include Jeffrey Alexander, David Brain, Craig Calhoun, Giles Gunn, Dick Hebdige, Chandra Mukerji, Charles Perrow, Michale Schudson, Margaret Somers, John Sutton, Ann Swidler, Diane Vaughan, Robin Wagner–Pacifici and Mayer Zeld. The conference will be web-based and the major sessions web-cast. Participants can choose to present their bodies at the physical conference or confine their contribution to spirited engagement through the web. Information and registration is available at HYPERLINK: http://www.M3DIA.com/culturalturn. Or by contacting Krista Paulsen at ct@sscf.ucsb.edu. The Cultural Turn is organized by Roger Friedland and John Mohr and electronically produced by Benjamin Bratton, all at UCSB.

Santa Barbara, CA : February 5–7, 1999

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

Papers are invited for the fourth annual Tennessee Williams Scholars' Conference. The Scholars' Conference is held in conjunction with the Tennessee Williams Festival, which features plays, writing workshops, panels, and celebrity appearances. Topics for this year's conference are: Williams and race, gay issues in Williams' drama, gender and gaze, Williams' evolving texts, his non-dramatic works, Williams' politics, fresh perspecitves on the late and early work, and Williams' reputation abroad. Panels will form apropos of these topics, and we will encourage open dialogue and audience participation. Graduate students are also encouraged to submit. Accepted papers may be considered for publication in the *Tennessee Williams Annual Review.* Only abstracts of full length papers will be read at the conference. Submission Deadline: November 1, 1998. For further information, please contact Dr. Robert Bray at Box 70, MTSU, Murfreesboro, TN 37132; phone: (615) 898-2579 or (615) 898-5959; fax (615) 898-5098; email: rbray@frank.mtsu.edu.

New Orleans, LA: March 25–26, 1999

HISTORY OF PRINT CULTURE

The Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP) announces its seventh annual conference. The event will be hosted by the Center for the History of Print Culture in Modern America, a joint project of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Proposals (1 page maximum) for papers/sessions are due November 19, 1998 to SHARP 1999, c/o James P. Danky, Co-Director, Center for the History of Print Culture in Modern America, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 816 State Street, Madison, WI 53706; Fax (608) 264-6520; email printcul@macc.wisc.edu. Registration information and program details are available on our website at http://slisweb.lis.wisc.edu/printcul/.

Madison, WI: July 15–18, 1999

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Hypotheses

THE JOY OF SETS

Who's responsible for the new math?

WHY IS IT THAT FRENCH theory so often ends up having a baneful effect on American pedagogy? I am thinking not of Derrida, but of another figure, one whose influence reached these shores well before him: Bourbaki.

Nicolas Bourbaki is without a doubt the most tireless mathematical theorist of the twentieth century. In 1939 he began producing a series of treatises under the umbrella title *Eléments de mathématique*. The project is an attempt to rebuild the house of mathematics from the ground up, as though Descartes were the architect and Napoleon the engineer. The edifice that has taken shape over decades is a formalistic wonder, a vast deductive structure built on an austere axiomatic foundation.

Rigor and abstraction reign. Take Bourbaki's characterization of the numeral one. After nearly two hundred pages of preliminaries, this number is finally defined in terms of a forbidding concatenation of formal symbols—which, a footnote adds, is only an abbreviation. The unabbreviated form of the definition, the reader is informed, would require many tens of thousands of symbols.

Some mathematicians have been hostile to Bourbaki's philosophy. By neglecting physical intuition and problem solving, they felt, it divorced mathematics from the real world, making the subject into a kind of logical theology. Deduction from the first principles—for which the French have a particular fondness—is stressed at the expense of the more English reliance on geometrical interpretation and model building.

Yet by the late 1950s Bourbaki's prestige had become irresistible for American educators. Why, they wondered, should children waste precious years solving concrete problems with numbers when they could be imbibing abstract axioms that would teach them mathematics Bourbaki-style? Thus was born a terrible thing: new math.

In the 1960s new math took Bourbaki into into high schools and grade schools, even into kindergartens, where a game called WFF and Proof (WFF stands for "well-formed formula") was introduced to get preschoolers to be more rigorous in their deductive inferences. I myself was a victim of new math. The nuns who taught me in elementary school had been brainwashed into believing that arithmetic was not about numbers but about more abstract entities called "sets." Thus if you were asked to solve the equation $x + 3 = 5$, you didn't dare say "two." You said, "the set whose member is two." It was like being on *Jeopardy*, where the contestants have to phrase their answers in the form of a question.

New math left American parents doubly befuddled: First, they could not understand the mathematics; second, they could not understand why their children were unable to do the simple things—recite the multiplication table, figure out percentages—that they had learned to do in school. Given the Cold War atmosphere of the time, it was inevitable that some would suspect that new math was a Red conspiracy to ruin American education.

Actually, it was a conspiracy of sorts. For M. Bourbaki was, and continues to be, a figment. The real authors of *Eléments de mathématique* are a cabal of French mathematicians. They seem to have borrowed their collective nom de plume from a French military officer of Greek ancestry, one Charles-Denis-Sauter Bourbaki. General Bourbaki distinguished himself in the Crimean War, declined an offer of the throne of Greece in 1862, suffered a reversal of fortune in the Franco-Prussian War, and later tried to shoot himself while imprisoned in Switzerland. He missed.

One of the seven founding members of Bourbaki was the incomparable André Weil, who died this summer in Princeton at the age of ninety-two. The brother of the religious mystic Simone Weil, André Weil was long considered the world's greatest living mathematician. Like many great mathematicians, he was capable of indolence. When a student of his once needed a particular result for his thesis, Weil told him that he was sure the result was true and could be safely used but that he was too lazy to write out a proof. So the student employed the result and credited it to "Nicolas Bourbaki of the Royal Academy of Poldavia."

The membership of Bourbaki is thought to vary from ten to twenty mathematicians. With a few conspicuous exceptions—like the late Samuel Eilenberg of Columbia University—the conspirators have always been French. Retirement from this *société anonyme* is compulsory at the age of fifty, in order to keep the project from getting sclerotic. Yet its allure has waned within the profession. The feeling is that, as Freeman Dyson once put it, Bourbaki's obsession with generality and structure makes the approach insensible to "things of accidental beauty," things that "have a quality of strangeness, of unexpectedness."

Meanwhile, volumes of *Eléments de mathématique* continue to appear, albeit less frequently than in the past. And there are those who persist in believing that Bourbaki is a flesh-and-blood theorist—if a reclusive one. An invitation issued to M. Bourbaki to attend an English conference in 1968 elicited the excuse that his "well-known timidity and modesty prevented him from speaking in public."

As for the skeptics, while they may make bold to assail Bourbaki formalism, they should think twice before trying to cast doubt on the existence of the polycephalic author himself. When a paragraph in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, written by one Ralph P. Boas, described Bourbaki as a group, the editors at once received a letter of protest signed by an injured "N. Bourbaki." Soon it was being put about that Ralph P. Boas did not exist but was merely a pseudonym for a shady group of American mathematicians.

JIM HOLT

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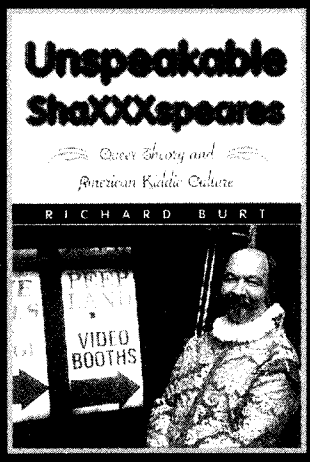

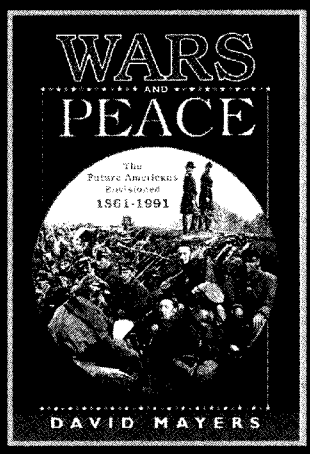

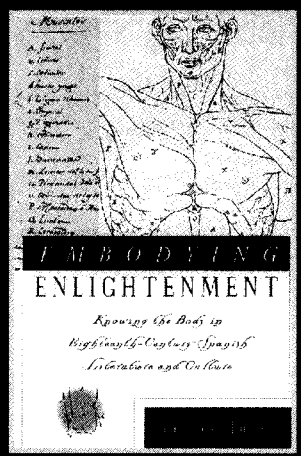

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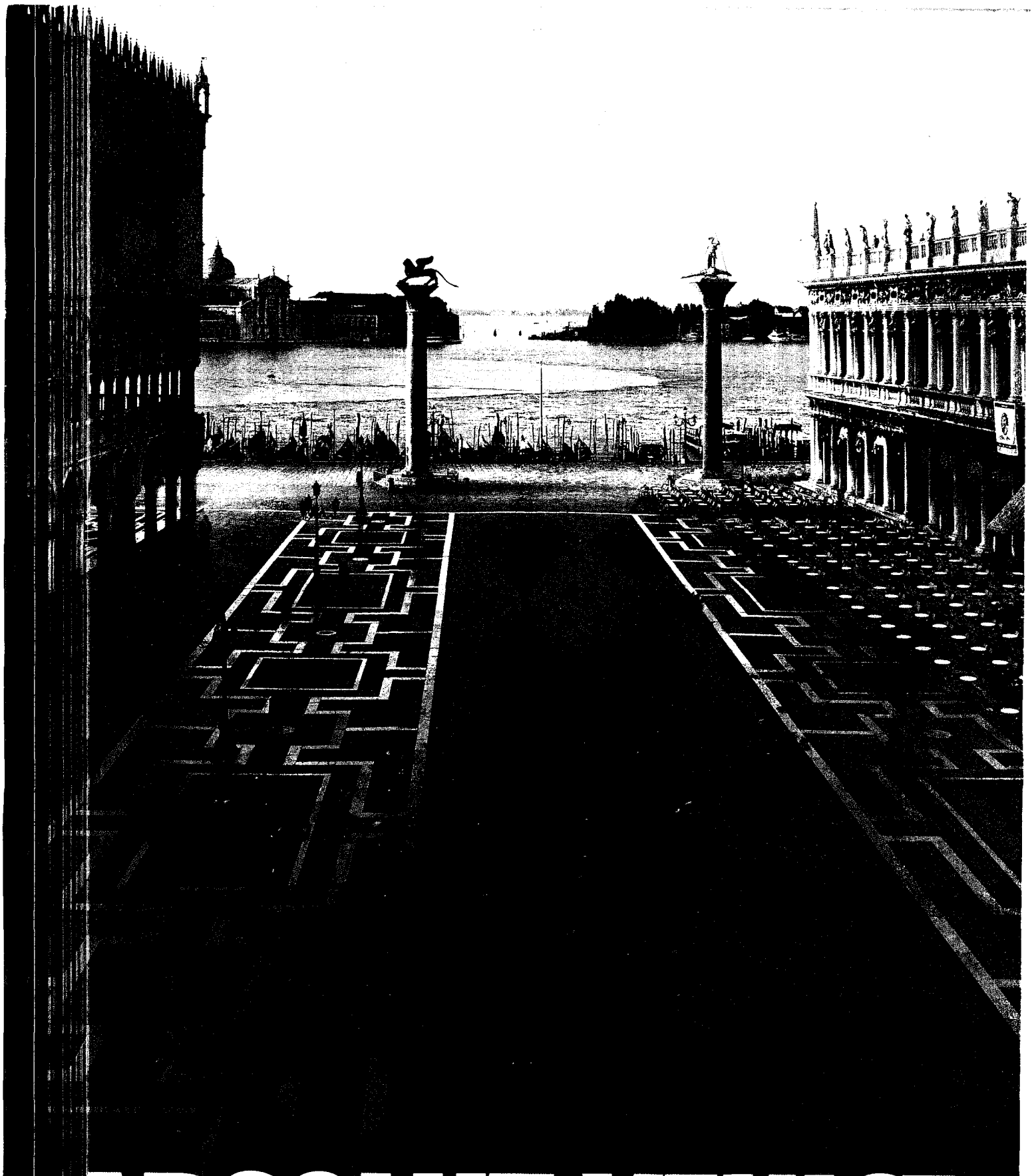

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